Oriental Bird Club

SPECIAL ISSUE
10th Anniversary

Bulletin 19 • May 1994

The Oriental Bird Club aims to:

- **encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.**
- **liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.**
- **collate and publish material on Oriental birds.**

Two bulletins and a journal, *Forktail*, are published annually

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Membership of OBC

Membership of the Club is open to all and costs £12 per annum (£8 reduced rate for nationals living in Oriental countries), £16 Family, £36 Corporate Members, £20 Sponsoring Member (supporting the Honorary Membership Scheme, and £20 for organisations, libraries and universities. Special arrangements for payment in USA, Thailand and India. To join or for further details please contact the Membership Secretary, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, U.K.

Cover illustration:
Grey-crowned Crocias *Crocias langbianis* by Pham Quang.
The species was rediscovered in Vietnam earlier this year, more than 50 years after its original discovery.

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The first ten years

A review of the formation and achievements of the Oriental Bird Club

Oriental Bird Club
10th Anniversary

As the first decade of the OBC draws to a close and as we look forward to the second, it is time to reflect on the origins and formation of the Club, its achievements in the first ten years and our aspirations for the future. Who better that OBC's first and current chairmen to join forces and give a resumé of the Club's first decade.

Discussions concerning the formation of the Club began informally as early as 1982 when it became increasingly apparent that there was a growing interest in birding and bird conservation in the Indian subcontinent, and that many valuable records and data were being lost to posterity by remaining buried in personal notebooks. Perhaps the time was right to form a society which catered specifically for their needs, along the lines of the successful Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME)?

Occasional discussions continued though 1983 in various Norwich pubs and eventually, on 4 April 1984, the first formal inaugural meeting was held in Norwich, attended by Mark Cocker, Jon Eames, Dick Filby, Carol and Tim Inskipp, Rod Martins, Chris Murphy and Nigel Redman amongst others. Three others involved in the early discussions, Richard Grimmett, Craig Robson and Frank Lambert, were away in India and Malaysia. Previously, it had been considered that the area to be covered should be restricted to the Himalayan region, but at this first meeting it was agreed that the society should encompass the entire Indian subcontinent. It was also recognised that the new society should be organised along similar lines to OSME, and even at this early stage conservation was considered an essential cornerstone. Like OSME, it was proposed that the society should publish two Bulletins per year and, if possible, an annual journal.

The second formal meeting was held in Cambridge on 22 June 1984 and, in addition to most of the persons listed above, was also attended by Nigel Collar, Clive Denby, Paul Goriup, Tim Reed and Helen Taylor. A number of key decisions were made at this important meeting. Firstly, in order to avoid conflict with the Bombay Natural History Society and to appeal to a wider audience, it was agreed to cover the entire Oriental Region. Furthermore, it was proposed that the word 'club' be used as it sounded less heavyweight than a society. Thus the name Oriental Bird Club was born, and the essential aims of the Club, which remain virtually unchanged to this day, were drawn up. Important decisions regarding funding were also made at this meeting and in particular it was proposed that OBC set up a Founder Membership scheme. This proved to be an outstanding success and provided a sound financial basis for the Club. In addition, a reduced rate subscription was suggested for Oriental nationals who had difficulty in paying the full subscription.

The third meeting on 18 August 1984 was also in Cambridge and attracted no less than 24 people. At this meeting a launching committee was appointed for one year. The meeting was chaired for the first time by Richard Grimmett and other officers appointed included Carol Inskipp as Secretary, Nigel Redman as Treasurer, Rod Martins as Membership Secretary, Jon Eames as Publicity Officer and Craig Robson as Information Officer. In addition, an Editorial Committee was set up and the basis for a network of country representatives was established. The all-important question of a Club logo was finally settled when a forktail was chosen in preference to earlier suggestions of a paradise flycatcher or a drongo.

During 1984 advice and opinions were sought from a number of more eminent and established persons such as Salim Ali, J. C. Daniel, David Wells, David Melville and Jane Fenton (of ICBP). A further three meetings were held at which a forktail design by Craig Robson was chosen as the Club's logo, subscription rates of £20 (Founder), £6 (Ordinary) and £5 (Oriental national) were set, a permanent address for the Club was established thanks to the generosity of the RSPB, Tim Reed was appointed editor of the Bulletin, and a full scale publicity drive was initiated.

The Club was officially launched in January 1985 and an inaugural members' meeting was held in March at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. Even the ever-optimistic launching committee were astounded by the success of this first meeting which was attended by no less than 129 people. Nigel Redman opened the programme with a taste of avian diversity in the Orient and other talks were by Carol Inskipp on conservation priorities in the Orient, James Wolstencroft on Corbett National Park and Mark Beaman on China.

The first Bulletin, a modest, 28 page, A5-sized issue, was published in May 1985 and the second, 40 page issue appeared in the autumn. Considerable assistance with production and costs was received from the Conservation Monitoring Centre (now WCMC) and the RSPB. The launching committee continued to meet regularly and by the end of the year membership had risen to 420. Other initiatives in 1985 included drafting a Constitution for the Club and the start of work on a Checklist of Oriental Birds (which, although still not finished, is at last nearing completion). The Club's first AGM, at Finsbury Library in December 1985, attracted 120 people. This meeting saw the election of the Club's first Council, comprising most of those who had served on the launching committee, and the formal adoption of the Constitution. The proceeds of the Christmas raffle represented the first contribution to the Conservation Fund.

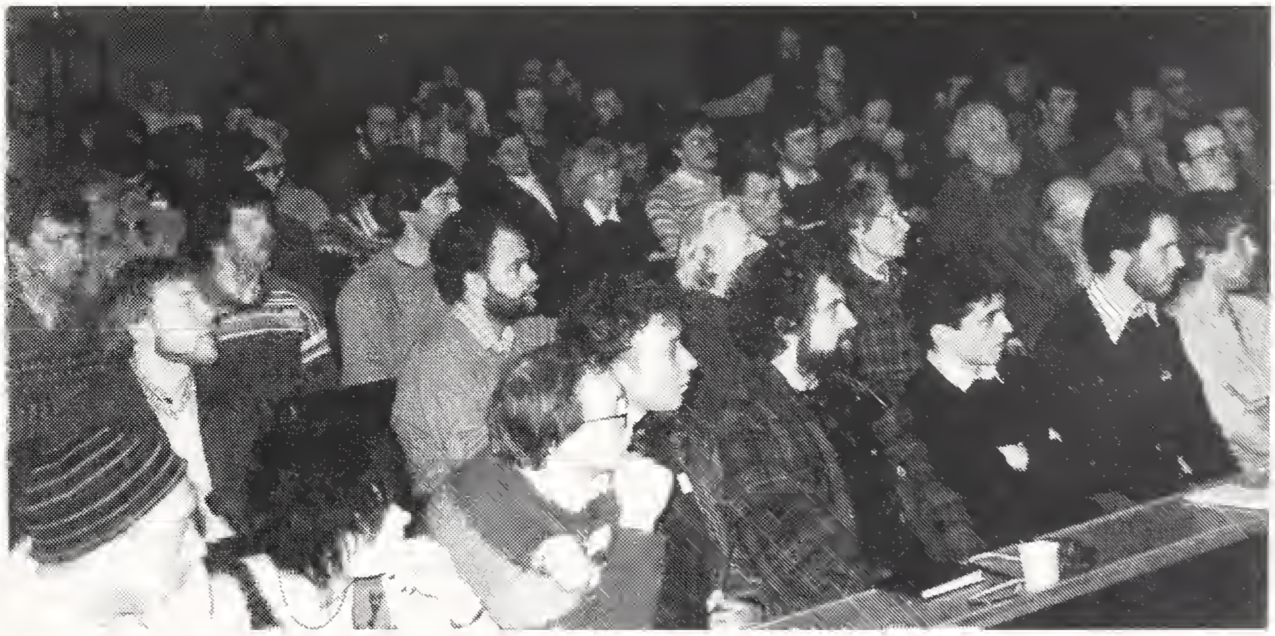
In 1986 the Club organised its first fundraising event, a sponsored birdwatch, which took place in Norfolk in May and raised £340. In the same year Mark Cocker took over as Bulletin Editor and Nigel Collar was appointed editor of *Forktail*, the Club's new journal. The first issue of *Forktail* appeared in October 1986 complete with a striking colourful cover. The design of *Forktail*, conceived by Pisces Publications, remains much the same to this day. The first OBC Manchester meeting took place during the year and this location has since become a regular fixture.

Another important development of 1986 was the introduction of the Club's first T-shirt featuring a flying hornbills design by Adam Davison. This proved to be very popular and, as a result, one or two new designs have appeared each year since. Some of the earlier designs are now almost collectors' items, but it is the newer colourful T-shirts conceived by Graeme Green and featuring designs and paintings by Martin Woodcock which have sold in large numbers. As every Club member must know, OBC T-shirts are now an important source of income for the Club's Conservation Fund and it is almost obligatory to own at least one!

The Club's first meeting outside the U.K. was held in February 1987 in the Netherlands. It was organised by Frank Rozendaal, the Club's Dutch representative, and primarily aimed at Dutch members. A number of other meetings outside the UK have been held subsequently in Sweden, Denmark, Malaysia and again in the Netherlands. 1987 also saw the introduction of two new UK venues for meetings: a full day meeting during the August Bank Holiday weekend at Blakeney, and an evening function in October on the Scilly Isles. The Scilly meetings continued for a number of years but logistical and organisational problems have finally taken their toll. The Blakeney meetings, however, have been an outstanding success and have become an important date in the British ornithological calendar - the most recent meeting, in 1993, attracted about 300 people! Also in 1987, the Club's AGM was moved to its present, congenial venue at London Zoo.

Meanwhile, the Conservation Fund was developing slowly and gaining momentum. Proper guidelines were drawn up and, in addition

Richard Grimmett, OBC's first chairman, explains the Club's aims at the inaugural meeting (Photo: Paul Goriup).



Members enjoying a talk at OBC's inaugural meeting in Norwich, U.K. (Photo: Paul Goriup).

to a small grants scheme, a *Forktail* Conservation Award was launched in the autumn of 1986. Unfortunately, with only one (unsuitable) application, no award was made in 1987 and the £500 grant was carried forward to 1988. Two small grants, however, were awarded in 1987: £250 to assist research work on Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* in Thailand, and a donation of £300 towards publication costs of an important book by Phil Round, *Resident Forest Birds in Thailand*. The first *Forktail* Conservation Award was made in 1988 to Frank Rozendaal to study pittas in Vietnam.

Fundraising continued in earnest at this time and, finally, in 1988 there were two major breakthroughs. Firstly, a donation of £1000 from the Lok Wan Tho Memorial Foundation enabled the Club to set up the Honorary Membership Scheme. This provided the means to support a number of people who were unable to pay subscriptions but who deserved to be members of the Club. In addition, WWF (Hong Kong) also provided funding for some Honorary Members in China. This funding lasted for several years and, when it finally ran out, the support of the Club's Honorary Members was guaranteed by the introduction of the Corporate Membership scheme whereby each Corporate Member (now renamed Business Supporter) covers the membership dues of three Oriental nationals in addition to their own subscription. Secondly, the Club's long association with Leica began in 1988 when Leica agreed to support the Conservation Award. With £500 from both Leica and the OBC, the new £1000 *Forktail*-Leica Award was born. The first *Forktail*-Leica Award was made in 1989 to Rene Dekker for his study of Nicobar Scrubfowl *Megapodius nicobariensis*. Strong preference is given to Oriental nationals and the annual award has gained considerable prestige in the region.

1988-89 was a testing time for OBC Council as most of the original members of Council retired by rotation or took up new posts on Council. Such a major re-organisation was not without its problems, but on the whole the transition was smooth and effective. New blood was brought in at a crucial time, while a number of the dedicated founders of the Club continued in new roles. In particular, Carol Inskipp took over as Conservation Officer (jointly with Paul Jepson for a short while), Helen Taylor became Bulletin Editor and Mike Crosby was appointed as Secretary (later to take over the membership database). In December 1989 Richard Grimmett stood down as Chairman and his place was taken by Paul Jepson. At the same time Richard Bosanquet took over as Treasurer, and during his term of sound financial management (which ended in 1993) the Club's income almost trebled.

The early 1990s saw a satisfying steady growth in the Club. Membership rose from 710 at the end of 1989 to 1013 by the end of 1993. Effective publicity and membership development contributed to this success and OBC's presence at such events as the Rutland Bird Fair proved to be very valuable. Grant applications began to flow swiftly into the Club and the Conservation Fund awarded more and more grants to dozens of worthy projects throughout the region (see pages 35-38 in this issue). Grants were largely funded through increased sales of T-shirts, commissions on book sales and raffles at meetings, but in 1990 the funding took a great leap forward with the introduction of the Grand Prize Draw (now the Mega Prize Draw!). Promoted by Dick Filby and with prizes kindly donated by Leica, Nikon, WildWings and Bird & Wildlife Bookshop (amongst others), the Draw raises around £3000 each year for conservation.

During 1991 Nigel Collar reluctantly stood down as Editor of *Forktail*, having firmly established its reputation over the six previous years, and his place was taken by Tim Inskipp (who in fact had been co-editor with Nigel Collar for two years). In July of the same year Paul Jepson, who had only been Chairman for a year and a half, resigned to take up a post for ICBP (now BirdLife International) in Indonesia. Paul was replaced by Nigel Redman who officially began his term in 1992. Perhaps the most notable achievement of 1992 was the upgrading of the Bulletin. With Adrian Long as Editor, the size was increased, paper quality improved and colour was introduced for the first time. The improvements continue, and the autumn 1993 Bulletin ran to 76 pages and a colour cover. Increased advertising in the Bulletin reflect the achievements of Nick Gardner as Promotions Officer, and in particular the introduction of the Corporate Sponsorship scheme has generated considerable income for the Club. Each Corporate Sponsor is required to donate at least £500 to the Conservation Fund and at present OBC has no less than eleven Corporate Sponsors. The most recent initiative on the fundraising front is the launch in 1994 of the OBC-In Focus Conservation Awareness Award which is worth £1000 each year to the winner.

To summarise the achievements of the first decade is no easy task. In ten years the Club has grown from truly modest beginnings to become a respected voice in Oriental ornithology.

Membership is now poised to exceed 1,200 and spans at least 47 countries. The Conservation Fund has donated over £24,000 to some 60 projects since 1987. An active network of representatives keeps Council in touch with developments in most Oriental countries as well as with many other western nations, and the representatives also play a major role in promoting the Club in their respective countries - this network was one of the key aims from the earliest days and it ensures that the Club is genuinely international. During this time no less than 43 OBC members have served on Council (and a few others took part in the earlier discussions or were on the launching committee).

Members will surely agree that membership of OBC offers many benefits - an informative Bulletin, a respected journal, attractive T-shirts, lively and well attended meetings, and the opportunity to directly contribute to conservation. As for the future, Council have already begun to develop plans for the second decade and a number of long-term objectives have been drawn up. A target of 2000 members by the year 2000 would certainly enable the Club to achieve even more.

Nigel Redman and **Richard Grimmett**

Club News

OBC Meetings in 1994

Please contact Graeme Green on +44 (0)296-631089 for more information on OBC meetings, including if you would like to have a sales stand at any of the meetings listed below.

Manchester on Saturday 18 June.
The meeting will be held again at Gatley United Reformed Church hall and will begin at 12h00. The main talks will be Mark Beaman on Birds of the Tibetan Plateau, Nigel Lindsey on lesser known bird areas in the Orient, and a selection of oriental bird images that will include something of interest for everyone.

Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk on Sunday 28 August.
The most popular OBC meeting of the year will include Pete Morris speaking on the birds of the Philippines, Michael Poulsen on Luzon and Tim Loseby on Sri Lanka.

1993 AGM at the Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regents Park, London on Saturday 10 December.
Special 10th Anniversary meeting. Talks to be announced later.

Mega Prize Draw Raises £3,744

Last year's Mega Prize Draw raised an exceptional £3,744 (US$5,616) for the Conservation Fund. Bill Oddie drew the numerous prizes (over fifty!) at the AGM on 10th December 1993, but it was a real shame that there were so few prize winners amongst the audience! The first prize of Leica 10x42 binoculars went to Mr M. J. Austin, while Messrs. Cross, I. S. Smith, T. Q. Jupe, G. L. Elphick and A. Drewitt each received the two volume masterpiece *The Birds of Pakistan*. The success of the Mega Prize Draw reflects the enormous support shown by all of you who purchased raffle tickets or helped to sell them and the generous donations from Leica, Oxford University Press, Bird and Wildlife Bookshop, Birdwatch, Birding World, British Birds and WildSounds. Birdwatch, Birding World and British Birds also kindly distributed the raffle tickets with their magazines.

This year's Mega Prize Draw promises to be even more attractive. In addition to the usual prizes, we will also be offering a £500 voucher for the purchase of optical equipment from In Focus and a free holiday for two in Portugal. **All we need now is your continued support so that we can keep on meeting our growing conservation commitments.**

Name change for corporate membership scheme

To avoid confusion with our Corporate Sponsorship Scheme, Corporate Members are now referred to as **Business Supporters**. This change of name also highlights the special relationship that Business

Supporters have withthe club. Their membership allows the club to fund the Honorary Membership Scheme and as such Business Supporters are making a significant contribution to conservation.

Since the last bulletin the number of Business Supporters has increased to 27, enabling us to fund 81 Honorary Members. Amongst our new Business Supporters are Helm Information Ltd, Lama Parivar (specialists in Himalayan Wildlife tours), Field Guides and Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. The last two organisations are well known US bird tour operators and it is great news to see companies outside the U.K. joining as Business Supporters.

Murphy's Wildlife - Eleventh Corporate Sponsor

As many members will know, Chris Murphy of Murphy's Wildlife has had a long association with OBC. His relationship with the club started as a founder member, then a Business Supporter, and he has also been our country representative for Ireland for many years. Consequently, we were overjoyed to welcome Murphy's Wildlife as a Corporate Sponsor and his donation is being used to set up a Bird Field Study Centre in Nepal. Interestingly, Murphy's Wildlife will shortly be offering birdwatching holidays to Asia, in addition to their programme of holidays in Ireland and the rest of Europe.

Reduced Subscription Rates for British Birds

Members should note that a reduced rate subscription is available for the excellent monthly journal *British Birds*. Increasing use of colour has in recent years made this journal even better value for money, while over the last year articles on Oriental birds have included Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* and waders in Hong Kong. For further details on this special subscription offer, please write to Mrs Erika Sharrock, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, U.K., mentioning that you are an OBC member.

Membership

In order to produce labels for *Forktail* and the Bulletins, the Club keeps membership records (ie. name, address and details of type of subscription and year paid) on personal computer. In order to comply with the U.K. Data Protection Act 1984, the Club can confirm that these details are not released to any outside source. Members who do not wish their records to be retained on computer should advise the Membership Database Officer in writing.

Please remember to advise the Membership Secretary if you change your address.

All members who have joined the Club for 1993 should have received Bulletins 17 and 18 and Forktail 9. Any member who has not received these should advise the Membership Secretary as soon as possible.

Selangor International Bird Race 1994

The annual Selangor Bird Race has become a regular fixture in recent years and has succeeded in raising valuable funds for the Kuala Selangor Nature Park in Malaysia. This year's race, the fifth, will take place on 22 and 23 October, and the organisers of the event have kindly invited OBC to provide a team.

If any OBC member would like to take part in this important event or even organise a team we would be pleased to hear from you. There is an entry fee of US$2000 per team ($500 per person), which participants may wish to raise from sponsorship. Unfortunately it is not possible for OBC to contribute to this cost from club funds, but it is expected that discounted air tickets to Malaysia will be available from Malaysian Airlines. If so, then the entry fee would most probably be more than offset by the subsidised air fare.

If any OBC member is planning a trip to Malaysia in October then this is an ideal opportunity to take part in this prestigious event. Not only could you represent the Club for the Bird Race (in our 10th anniversary year) but you could also get a subsidised trip to Malaysia. If any member is interested in pursuing this, please let us know as soon as possible.

Payment by credit card now offered

As a continuing service to members, the Club has registered with Cardnet to allow members to pay subscriptions, sales and donations by the following types of credit cards:

Access ● Mastercard ● Visa ● Eurocard

Members and others wishing to use this service should either write to the Club asking for a suitable form to be sent or write stating in Pounds sterling the amount they would like to pay and details of the payment.

The following information is required to meet Cardnet's requirements:

- Type of card used and card number
- Expiry date of card

- Cardholder's name, address and signature.

New bird clubs

The Club wishes every success to the Neotropical Bird Club (NBC) and also to the recently formed African Bird Club (ABC) in the important work necessary in these major faunal regions of the world.

The Neotropical Bird Club uses the same address for correspondence as the Oriental Bird Club. Apart from this, there is **no financial or other connection between NBC and OBC and members who belong to both Clubs should always send communications separately**.

Special thanks to Nikon UK Ltd and Bird and Wildlife Bookshop

The club would like to express its deep gratitude to Nikon UK Ltd and Bird and Wildlife Bookshop, who each donated £500 to subsidise the cost of colour insertions in this bulletin. Without their support the Club would not have been able to make this tenth anniversary issue so attractive and memorable.

OBC Checklist nears completion

The Oriental Bird Club has been preparing an annotated checklist of the birds of the Oriental Region for several years. It was hoped that this could be published during the Club's tenth anniversary year, but the complexity of the task has defeated us, and it will not be available until early 1995. However, we hope that members will find that it has been well worth waiting for, as it will provide an up-to-date taxonomic summary for part of the world where many interesting issues remain to be resolved.

The publication of Sibley and Monroe's *Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world* in 1990, based upon the revolutionary DNA-DNA hybridisation methodology developed by Charles Sibley and colleagues, has stimulated a major new debate on bird taxonomy and generated considerable popular interest in the subject. This global work has been used as the framework for the OBC Checklist, which will be cross-referenced to all of the major checklists and fieldguides covering the Oriental Region. It will therefore be possible for users to see at a glance how taxa have been treated by the authors of these works, whether as full species or as subspecies, and the variations in the English names which have been used for them. It is intended that the OBC Checklist will follow the controversial Sibley and Monroe family sequence, which is already used in *Forktail*; it remains to be seen how widely this sequence will be adopted by the ornithological world, but publication of the new sequence in the OBC Checklist will make it available to many OBC members resident in the region (and elsewhere) who do not have access to Sibley and Monroe's works.

Perhaps the most exciting and stimulating aspect of the checklist is that it will highlight the many taxonomic issues which remain to be resolved in the Oriental Region. Detailed, fully-referenced footnotes to these controversial taxa will enable readers to conduct their own research on them, and hopefully encourage them to carry out fieldwork in the places where new information is needed.

Singapore Meeting and Bird Race 1994

A joint OBC/Nature Society of Singapore meeting will be held during 19-21 October 1994, followed by the annual Singapore Bird Race on 22-23. The event, starting at 18h00 on 19 will combine talks with half-day field outings. These will include the Panti Forest Reserve in southern Malaysia and the exciting new Sungei Buloh Nature Park. Speakers are likely to include Peter Kennerley on the birds of China, and Dr. Ho Hue Chew on conservation in Singapore. The cost, including dinner each evening, will be S$100 (approx. US$62/£42). Help with accommodation arrangements may be offered for early bookings (by 30 June). Participants and OBC members are also invited to enter the 24-hour Bird Race with help from local guides, which will start at 08h00 on 22 from the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve Centre. At least 130 species can be expected locally. A registration fee of S$50 (approx. US$30/£20) is required, which will support the many conservation and education projects of NSS. Further details and bookings for both events can be obtained from: Lim Kim Seng (OBC Singapore joint-representative), c/o Nature Society (Singapore), 601 Sims Drive, #04-04 Pan-I Complex, Singapore 1438, Tel: 65 7412036/Fax: 65 7410871.

OBC/*Dutch Birding* Meeting

The Tenth Anniversary got off to a great start at Utrecht on 5th February when over 200 people, including members from Holland, Belgium, Denmark and the UK attended *Dutch Birding's* annual Vogeldag, giving a good international feel to the meeting. The broad experience of our hosts was reflected in the programme, ranging from an introduction to the birds of Ethiopia by Carl Bijleveld, including superb slides of some of the country's endemics and a fascinating account of the breeding waders on the remote tundra of the Taimyr Peninsula by Marc Argeloo, describing an ongoing joint Dutch/Russian government-sponsored project. Nigel Lindsey brought us back home by vividly reviewing the vast range of habitats and wildlife diversity to be found in the Oriental Region, relating the enormous problems that it faces, and illustrating OBC's conservation commitment through a selection of successfully funded projects. This was followed by Frank Lambert's graphic description of the effects of selective logging on lowland forest birds in Sabah with some excellent slides, suggesting how careful management of forest resources might conserve these bird communities. René Dekker once again took us 'in search of Megapodes', and we briefly shared in his enormous enthusiasm and knowledge of this fascinating and little-known family. A traditional mystery bird competition presented by Arnoud van den Berg caused much excitement, and an amusing 'bi-lingual' review of 1993 rare birds in Holland by Wim Wiegant completed the programme. The social emphasis and oriental flavour of the day was appropriately concluded at an excellent local Chinese restaurant.

On the Sunday, the 34 visiting members were treated to a birding tour in the expert company of Arnoud van den Berg. Impressive numbers of geese and other wildfowl and many raptors were appreciated, but the highlight of the day for most were the fine views of a male Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* at its roost hole.

It was a highly successful and enjoyable weekend, and OBC are most grateful to *Dutch Birding* for their hospitality in hosting this event.

OBC 10th Anniversary T-Shirt

To mark our 10th Anniversary a special T-Shirt has been designed by Martin Woodcock. It features a Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata* and Mangrove Pitta *Pitta megarhyncha* in a mangrove setting, as shown on the enclosed 1994 sales leaflet. The design is probably Martin's most striking so far and has been unanimously admired by all those who have already seen it.

Orders may be placed in the usual way by using the sales leaflet enclosed with this Bulletin, and it is also included in our special multiple purchase offer.

Special anniversary T-shirt offer

In addition to the new design a special offer is also available during our anniversary year. **Multiple purchases** of the "Three Birds", Blue Pitta and the new anniversary design will be possible at the following reduced rates:

3 or 4 at £9 each (Surface mail), £11 each (Air mail).

5 or more at £8 each (Surface mail), £10 each (Air mail).

Any combination of the designs offered including multiples of the same one may be ordered. T-shirts can, of course, still be bought singly at the normal price of £11 (Surface mail) or £13 (Air mail)

"Three Birds" in grey

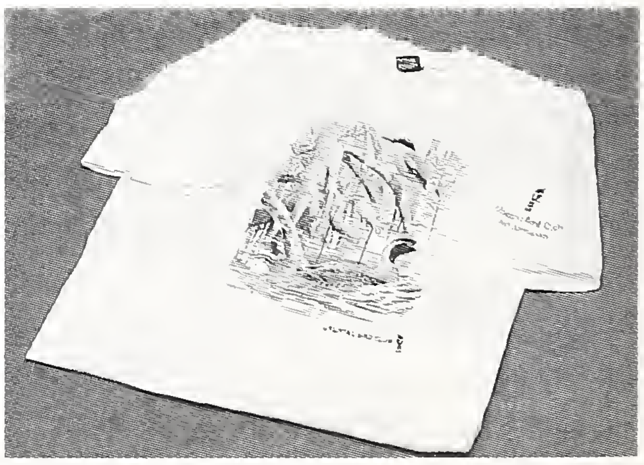
Members will want to note that the popular "Three Birds" design featuring Red-bearded Bee-eater, Black-and-yellow Broadbill and Rufous-collared Kingfisher is now available in grey as well as white.

A big thank you from OBC

The success of the Club relies greatly on help from individuals and organisations, especially now that we are expanding our publications and sales items while still trying to keep our overheads to a minimum.

The production of this bulletin would not have been possible without the enormous help of Michelle Hines and Bob Hibbert, who have given up their spare time unselfishly to help in the layout and design of this edition. The Editorial Committee would also like to thank the BirdLife International Secretariat for the use of their computing facilities, and to Eng-li Green for advice on printing and to John Howes for proof-reading.

OBC would like to thank Eng-li Green, Rob Still and Bob Hibbert for help in producing a number of promotional items for the Club this year. The Club is most grateful to Martin Woodcock for providing the beautiful artwork for the OBC T-shirts, and to Craig Robson, David Swithenbank, Nigel Lindsey, Kamol Komolphalin, Dave Showler and Dave Farrow who, among the many contributing artists, regularly donate their artwork for use in the Bulletin.



The new T-shirt for 1994 to celebrate OBC's 10th Anniversary

Conservation Fund

Compiled by OBC Conservation Officer, Melanie Heath

Carol Inskipp stood down as Conservation Officer at the end of last year and it is largely due to her hard work and dedication over the past five years that OBC has a well established Conservation Fund. Carol now serves on the newly established Conservation Sub-committee, together with Mike Crosby, Frank Lambert and the new OBC Conservation Officer, Melanie Heath. The committee will meet quarterly to consider grant applications and decisions taken will be reported back to OBC Council. Thanks to the generous support and sponsorship of many organisations and individuals a record sum of £7,200 ($10,800) was donated in grants for conservation work in the Orient in 1993, supporting 16 projects.

Conservation Awards in 1994

Applications are welcomed from nationals in the orient for two major awards this year, each worth £1,000: the *Forktail*-Leica Award for bird conservation and the *OBC-In Focus Conservation Awareness Award*. The closing date for applications is the 1 October 1994.

A number of small grants will also be offered again in 1994. Applications for these grants are welcome at any time of the year, but please do apply a few months in advance of your study, as decisions are finalised at OBC Council meetings which are held quarterly. To apply for a grant or to discuss the planned work please contact the Club's Conservation Officer, Melanie Heath.

Fifth Forktail-Leica Award Avifaunal survey - Anshi National Park

Malabar Trogon Harpactes fasciatus *by Nigel Lindsey*

The fifth *Forktail*-Leica Award was awarded to Dr. J. C. Uttangi to carry out an avifaunal survey in the Anshi National Park in the Western Ghats, India. Although poorly known the park is clearly an important area for birds, lying within the Western Ghats Endemic Bird Area and encompassing some 250 km^2 of pristine evergreen forest. The park is under severe threat; the Kali Hydroelectric Project has already resulted in the clearance of adjacent forest areas and the next phase of the project is planned to submerge 1,000 ha of evergreen forest and fell another 6,000 ha in Anshi.

In order to illustrate the importance of the area and thus help justify the cancellation of the next stage of the Kali Project, Dr Uttangi will carry out an intensive survey of the distributions of both resident and migratory birds and their habitats in the park. Amongst the wealth of birds in the area he expects to record Ceylon Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger*, Malabar Whistling-Thrush *Myiophonus horsfieldii*, White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javanensis* and Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*. These results will also be used to improve the management of the park.

Chinese Merganser in Xiao Xinganglang Mountain

Professor Zhao Zhengjie has been awarded £500 to study the breeding population and distribution of the Scaly-sided Merganser *Mergus squamatus* at Xiao Xinganglang Mountain, in north-east China. This is an important breeding area for this globally threatened species but little is known about its status or distribution there. Zhao Zhengjie's three year study will provide valuable data which will be used to achieve the protection and suitable management of the area for the Scaly-sided Merganser.

White-eared Night-Heron study

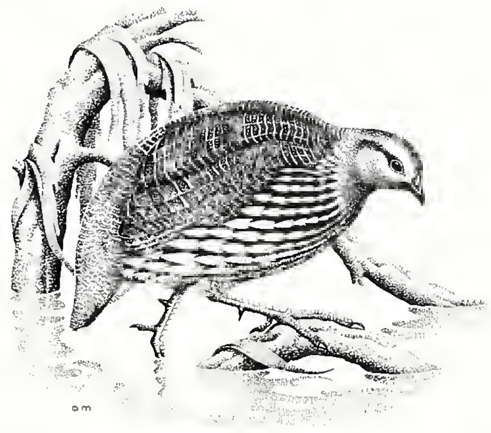
BIRDQUEST have donated £500 to help fund an ecological study of White-eared Night-Heron *Gorsachius magnificus* near Longhu mountain, south Guangxi, China by Zhou Fang and his team. OBC previously funded Zhou Fang to survey Longhu Mountain but no Night-Herons were found, unfortunately seemingly indicating a declining population. However, birds were seen in nearby areas in Wuming county. This study will assess the ecological requirements of the species in this area and examine the reasons for its endangerment, thus providing data urgently required to ensure its conservation.

Avifaunal survey of Sahyadri, northern Western Ghats

Prakash Gole has been awarded a grant of £500 to part-fund an avifaunal survey of the Sahyadri area in the northern Western Ghats, India to assess the status of endemic birds there and their conservation needs. Many of the northern areas of the Western Ghats face intense human pressure due to shifting cultivation, grazing, cutting and burning and a number of dams have been constructed submerging forests and riverine vegetation. Sahyadri holds semi-evergreen and deciduous forests with endemic species such as Malabar Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros griseus* and Malabar Whistling-Thrush *Myiophonus horsfieldii*. This urgently required survey will identify species and areas that require protection and raise conservation awareness in the area.

Avifaunal survey of Kaziranga National Park

A grant of £500 has been awarded to Professor P. C. Bhattacharjee to carry out an avifaunal survey of Kaziranga National Park in Assam, India. This park is the one of the most important sites for the conservation of birds in north-east India. It falls within the Assam Plains Endemic Bird Area and supports a number of globally threatened species including Greater *Leptoptilos dubius* and Lesser Adjutant *L. javanicus*, Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, White-bellied Heron *Ardea insignis*, Baer's Pochard *Aythya baeri*, Pallas's Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* and Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis*. Prof. Bhattacharjee will provide an up-to-date checklist and status report of the avifauna which will be used to advocate the implementation of suitable conservation measures by the park authorities and guide future research.



Swamp Francolin Francolinus gularis *by David Mead*

Li River Valley survey

Liu Xiaohua and his team received a grant of £500 to partly fund a preliminary survey of the Li River Valley, Guilin, Guangxi, China. This valley is a potentially interesting area of subtropical evergreen forest but is very poorly known ornithologically. It is thought that a number of rare bird species such as Cabot's *Tragopan caboti*, Temminck's Tragopan *T. temminckii* and Elliot's Pheasant *Syrmaticus ellioti* should occur there. This project will survey the composition and distribution of bird species in the valley and assess the status of available habitat. Based on this work suitable conservation measures will be recommended to the government.

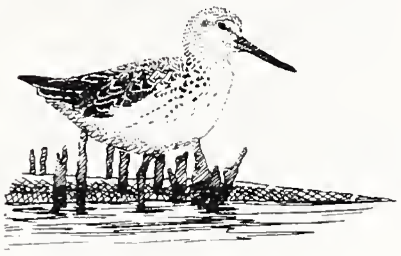
Mahadayi River Valley

An additional £100 was awarded to Dr. Uttangi to complete his avifaunal survey of forest reserves in the Mahadayi River Valley in the Western Ghats. Further visits will be made to the area to confirm the presence of some significant species.

Conservation of the Red River Delta, Vietnam

A grant of £500 will fund Le Dinh Thuy to contribute to a study aimed at improving the conservation and sustainable use of the Red River Delta, Vietnam. The Red River Delta is a wetland area of global importance and the most important staging and wintering area for migratory waterfowl in northern Vietnam. Several thousands of shorebirds, ducks and geese of more than 100 species use the area during migration including Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*, Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Spoonbill Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*; Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Saunders' Gull *Larus saundersi*.

The delta is subject to high population pressure and is intensively exploited. Bird populations have declined sharply due to excessive shooting, trapping and netting, cutting mangrove forest and human disturbance in connection with gathering bivalves for human consumption. This study plans to provide more information on the delta's importance for staging and wintering birds and the use of the area by local people. It aims to describe present and potential conflicts between conservation and needs of people and make recommendations for the future sustainable utilisation of the delta.



Nordmann's Greenshank Tringa guttifer *by Dave Bakewell*

Lesser Florican, western India

CYGNUS Wildlife Holidays donated £500 to Ravi Sankaran for his study of the Lesser Florican *Eupodotis indica* in western India. A critically endangered grassland species, the Lesser Florican continues to decline and a survey is needed to assess its current status.

This project aims, between June and December this year, to reassess the status of Lesser Florican in the area, identify target areas for grassland restoration and initiate the implementation of documented conservation measures. The study will culminate in a workshop aimed at securing a species conservation strategy with full support from state and central government agencies.

Bird Field Study Centre, Nepal

MURPHY'S WILDLIFE donated £500 to Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA) for the establishment of the Bird Field Study Centre, Siopadol, Bhaktapur. Camps will be held for children, aimed at educating them about resource management and conservation awareness. Children and youths will undertake a series of activities related to birds, their life patterns, including nesting and feeding, and their habitats and will be encouraged to take up hobbies related to birds and help their conservation.

Survey of White-winged Duck

WILDWINGS have donated £500 to fund Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury's survey of the White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* and Bengal Florican *Eupodotis bengalensis* in the Tinsukia District and adjacent areas of Assam, including parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The tropical rainforests in this area are the core of White-winged Duck distribution in the Indian Sub-continent and the tropical grasslands are the easternmost limit of distribution of Bengal Florican. Both species and their habitats are in decline and lack data. This project will survey all potential habitats in the area to ascertain the status and distribution of the species, assess the impact of man-made changes on habitats and prepare an Action Plan for conservation.

White-winged Duck Cairina scutulata *by Anwaruddin Choudhury*

CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION

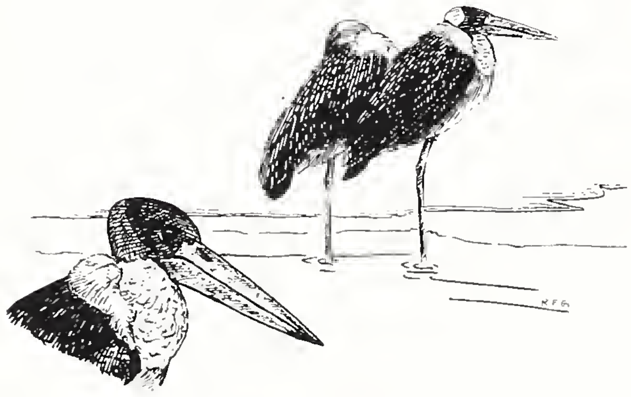
Bird survey of Dibru-Saikhowa Wildlife Sanctuary

Survey work in the Dibru-Saikhowa wildlife sanctuary (640 km ^{2}) in eastern Assam, India continues assisted by the donation of NATURETREK. This study was initiated in July 1992 but since April 1993 greater emphasis has been given to the avifauna. During recent surveys of the sanctuary, adjacent villages and tea gardens and two small forest reserves, Bherjan and Podumoni, over 250 bird species have been recorded including White-bellied Heron *Ardea insignis*, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*, Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca*, Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, Pallas's Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Common Crane *Grus grus*, Bengal Florican *Eupodotis bengalensis* and Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*.

Although the White-winged Duck has not been seen during this survey, four nest sites have been discovered together with many reported sightings from locals. The Assam Roofed Turtle *Kachuga sylhetensis* was also recorded for the first time in the area, constituting the easternmost limit of its distribution.

The sanctuary is inadequately protected and communications between range officials and camps are poor. The situation would be improved with better infrastructural facilities including walkie-talkies. Major conservation problems are illegal felling of forest by nearby villagers and also fishing, grazing and collection of fuel wood and material for thatching.

Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury



Lesser Adjutant Leptoptilos javanicus
by Richard Grimmett

Avifaunal survey of Maduganga Islets, Sri Lanka

Between December 1992 and December 1993 bird species composition, abundance and distribution were investigated in the Maduganga Estuary and associated islands in Sri Lanka. Interpretation of aerial photographs showed that the number of islets is far less (15 as opposed to 60-140)than was originally thought. The main vegetation types are a narrow strip of mangroves fringing the coastline, homesteads, plantations (cinnamon, coconut, rubber) and scrub. Sixty-one bird species were recorded including Green Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula aenea*, Orange-breasted Green-Pigeon *Treron bicincta*, Pompadour Green-Pigeon *T. pompadora*, White-bellied Fish-Eagle *Haliaaetus leucogaster* and Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus*, but surprisingly few wading birds were seen (only 4 species), possibly due to the lack of mudflats and shoreline.

Mahendra Siriwardhane, Nihal Dayawasa, Rahula Peren, Prithivira Fernando and S. W. Kotogama

Annaivilundawa avifaunal survey

Avifaunal surveys of Annaivilundawa, Sri Lanka between November 1992 and January 1994 have been encouraging, with 137 bird species recorded. The area comprises a cluster of seven shallow reservoirs, heavily overgrown with vegetation, used to irrigate 1,000 acres of rice fields. As was expected, waterbirds numerically constitute the majority of birds in the area, which occasionally harbours over 3,000 duck as well as many resident herons, storks, cormorants, coots, jacanas, grebes, ibises, some of which breed there.

The study has also provided new distributional information for some Sri Lankan species such as Common Coot *Fulica atra* which was previously unknown from the Mannar and Anuradhapura.

Ceylon Junglefowl Gallus lafayetti
by Nigel Lindsey

Similarly the Black Drongo *Dicurus macrocercis* which is considered to be confined to the coastal stretch north of Puttalam was found in the study area some 35 km south of Puttalam. A noteworthy discovery was the presence of 11 Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* in July 1992, which previously had been recorded in Sri Lanka only in the swamps of the southern Colombo suburbs and at Kalametiya and Bundala in the extreme south. Just one of Sri Lanka's 23 endemic species, the Ceylon Junglefowl *Gallus lafayetii*, was found in the study area.

Development of these reservoirs is planned, including increasing their capacity, further intensification of rice cultivation and increasing human settlement. Shooting during migration is a major threat when ducks are regularly hunted (especially during weekends), although this is illegal. Information collected during this survey, documenting the avifaunal importance of the area, will be used to justify its conservation, the aim being to obtain sanctuary status.

T. W. Hoffmann, Ceylon Bird Club

Conservation Ecology of the Great Hornbill in the Western Ghats, southern India

Great Hornbill Buceros bicornis
by Dave Farrow

During the last two years important studies (assisted by a donation from ORNITHOLIDAYS) of the poorly known Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* have been carried out in Top Slip in the Anaimalai hills of western Tamil Nadu state. The current distribution and abundance of the species within the study area, its dietary requirements, foraging patterns, seasonal abundance together with that of other avian frugivores in relation to resource availability, and foraging habitat have been studied.

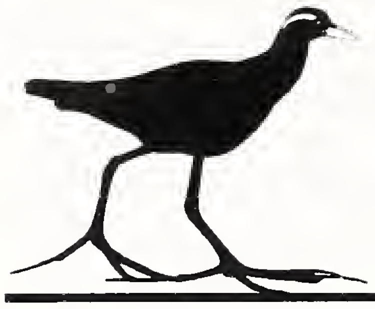
Studies of the phenology of important hornbill fruits are nearing completion, findings demonstrating the overwhelming importance of *Ficus* taxa to the species. Data collected on 24 Great Hornbill nests also showed the importance of large trees; in all plots nesting trees stood well above the canopy. Data have also been collected on 15 nests of the sympatric Malabar Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros griseus* and it is planned to measure nesting niche overlap with the Great Hornbill. A sequel to the Great Hornbill project is the Malabar Grey Hornbill project currently being conducted by Divya Mudappa (see *OBC Bull.* 18).

A total of 174 hours were spent observing an active Grey Hornbill nest. Details pertaining to parental visitation rates, quality and quantity of food delivered, incubation period and aspects of behaviour were recorded. Ten other nests in the locality were also monitored. An analysis of the data is currently in progress and findings will be shortly submitted as a doctoral thesis.

Another significant aspect of the work has been a series of presentations on hornbill research to Forest Department trainees visiting Top Slip. The importance of conserving *Ficus*, large nesting trees and forest regeneration (which is greatly affected by tribal removal for fuel wood) were emphasised. Also the cutting of *Ficus* by the Forest Department, to provide cheap fodder for elephants engaged in forest department work, which has resulted in a drastic decline of fig tree populations, has now been banned from the sanctuary and about 2,000 *Ficus* saplings have been planted in an attempt to compensate for the loss. Additionally, the project has received excellent publicity of late with the inclusion of a project report in all 16 editions of India's national newspaper the "Indian Express".

Ragupathy Kannan

Errata: The preliminary report on the Avifaunal survey of Desert National Park, Rajasthan, India in *Conservation Fund* in *OBC Bull. 18*, states that the Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus* was discovered to be resident in India during the survey. However, the species is given as resident in *Birds of Saurashtra* by R. S. Dharkmakumarsinhji (1955). Also 20,000 Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis* were seen during the survey rather than the published figure of 2,000.



Around the Orient

Compiled by Colin Poole

The primary purpose of Around the Orient is to provide a round up of a diverse range of local, national and international environmental conservation news from all parts of the Oriental Region. As such, as a way of spreading news of important environmental issues to a wider audience, it is one of the most important sections of the Bulletin.

This section relies very much on receiving news from as many sources as possible, and the bias of this issue towards mainland South-East Asia reflects the biases of the compiler and a handful of regular contributors. We would appeal therefore for all OBC members and readers of this Bulletin to inform us of any environmental news or matters that they are aware of, for example cuttings from a local newspaper or articles in regional magazines, all are useful and OBC can always follow up potential areas of concern for more information.

MALAYSIA

Sarawak's Flooded Forest

Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has announced the go-ahead of the Bakun Dam in Sarawak. The project which is scheduled to supply one quarter of Malaysia's power requirements by 2002, will flood 700 km^2 of primary lowland and sub-montane forest in the Rajang River Basin, in Sarawak's Seventh Division, and force the resettlement of 17 longhouse communities (5,000 tribal people).

The contract has been awarded to a company headed by local timber tycoon Ting Pek Khiing, who will recoup some of his costs by logging the 80,000ha dam site. The *New Straits Times* reports that the remaining hinterland surrounding the dam will be transformed into a National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary. Speaking at the announcement of the dam Dr Mahathir said, "The Government realises that such a project would cost the loss of trees and animals and may result in the displacement of people. But then there's a price to be paid in this world and the next".

Discoveries from Ulu Belum

The Malaysian Nature Society have announced the results of Phase One of their expedition to Ulu Belum. Belum is an area of pristine lowland and submontane forest near the Thai border in northern Perak, to which access had previously been restricted due to the long running communist insurgency. Highlights of the first seven months include several new insect species to science, and the only colony found in Malaysia of the giant flower *Rafflesia hasseltii* (previously thought to be endemic to Sumatra). 136 birds have been recorded including eight species of hornbill and astonishing counts of up to 2,000 Wreathed Hornbills *Aceros undulatus* flighting to feed. Large mammals have included Tiger *Panthera tigris*, Sun Bear *Helarctos malayanus*, Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* and Sumatran Rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*. Phase Two will be carried out during 1994 and will concentrate on a similar adjacent forest block. For further details contact MNS, PO Box 10750, 50724 Kuala Lumpur.

Record Logging Fine

The Pahang State Government has fined a logging concessionaire a record 7.5 million Malaysian Ringgit (£1.85 million) for logging illegally in the Yong Forest Reserve, Jerantut. This is the first major prosecution under the new National Forestry (Amendment) Act. The illegal logging was detected through the use of helicopter surveillance, Pahang being the first state to use this for enforcement purposes. However, Lim Keng Yaik, the Primary Industries Minister, refused to announce the name of the concessionare, fuelling speculation that important persons could be involved.

Fraser's Hill - No Water in the Waterfall

The deforestation associated with the development of the new 18 hole golf course on Fraser's Hill has caused serious problems for the infamous Fraser's Hill Waterfall - the Jeriau Waterfall on Sungai Hijau. It began to silt up in March 1993 and was closed to the public the following June. The Department of the Environment claimed that the developer had failed to adhere to the guidelines of the EIA and in September ordered the company to stop work until it had rectified the problem. Following the cessation of tree felling, the subsequent replanting of 20,000 saplings of 20-30 native species and the installation of 18 silt traps, the river has reportedly improved markedly and the company say that the restored Fraser's Hill Waterfall will be open to the public again by June 1994. Meanwhile, as Malaysian environmentalists voice increasing concern over the amount of development ensuing in the forest on and around the Hill, the Fraser's Hill Development Corporation, has announced that following the completion of the current golf course and apartment developments, there will be no further major construction projects on their part of the Hill.

INDIA

Narmada Continues - the Flooding Begins

Work on the controversial Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River is to continue as Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao has overruled an order from the Indian Ministry of Environment. The order had halted work on the grounds that the Gujarat State Government were not fulfilling their commitment to relocate villagers. Meanwhile, the protest in the local villages goes on. Despite assurances that the sluices would not be closed until June 1994, work began on 23 February, by 14 March the first house in the village of Vadgam was submerged by the rising waters, and several residents were still refusing to move. Their last hope seems to be an injunction filed in the Indian High Court by dam opponents, challenging the permanent closure of the sluices.

Damming the Himalayas

The Indian Cabinet approved in March the continued construction of the Tehri Dam on the Bhagirathi River in the Himalayas, a tributary of the Ganges in Uttar Pradesh. One of the highest dams in Asia, it will flood 27,000 ha and force the resettlement of between 80,000-100,000 people. Prime Minister Rao is reportedly requesting funding from UK and USA. The Ministry of Environment is apparently still withholding its clearance of the project due to the seismological and environmental risks, and requires the project authority to produce action plans on all these issues, including the flora and fauna.

Sultanpur Lake Revived

The water levels in Sultanpur Lake Bird Sanctuary, Haryana State, 40 km from Delhi, have been restored by the heavy monsoon of 1993 and two 300ft bore holes sunk by the Haryana Wildlife Department. Earlier in 1993 the lake had shrunk to only 15% of its current level. The increased water levels have resulted in the highest wintering bird populations for ten years, including 447 Great White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, 200 Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus* and 1,000 Shoveler *Anas clypeata*. Breeding birds have also increased, including 40 pairs of Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala* and one pair of Sarus Cranes *Grus antigone*. The success may be short-lived however, as the sanctuary is threatened by increasing encroachment and diversion of water by local farmers. In addition, the water provided by the bore holes is reportedly becoming increasingly saline.

Tiger Ups and Downs

Arin Ghosh, the Director of Project Tiger announced that the current Tiger *P. tigris* population in India is now only 3,750, having decreased from 4,334 in 1990. This now represents 60% of the known world population. Good news though is a survey carried out by the Malaysian National Parks and Wildlife Department which reported an increase in the population of Tigers in Malaysia in the last twenty years - from 250 in 1972 to 600 in 1993.

THE PHILIPPINES

The death of the Great Philippine Eagle?

The first Great Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi* to breed in captivity died in Davao City, Mindanao, in late 1993. Diola was a 25 year old female who had been the first bird to be successfully artificially inseminated by the Philippine Eagle Foundation, when she produced two young in 1992. The Foundation now believes that there are only 63 Great Philippine Eagles left, 16 of them in captivity, and if the current rate of deforestation continues they estimate that the Philippines will have no forest left to support them in the wild by the year 2000.

Great Philippine Eagle Pithecophaga jefferyi, *January 1994, Mindanao (Photo: P. Morris)*

LAOS

New Site for Vu Quang Ox to Disappear?

On 8 November 1993, The Lao Government has awarded the contract for the Nam Theun Dam - a 600 megawatt hydroelectric project - to a joint consortium of French, Japanese and Thai companies. The dam on the upper reaches of the Nam Theun River, a tributary of the Mekong in Khammouane Province, could flood as much as 500 km^2 of the Nakhay Plateau, an area of montane evergreen forest.

The area includes two of the country's highest priority conservation areas as identified by IUCN, but is little studied. It is the type locality for Sooty Babbler *Stachyris herberti* and has old records of many other important species such as Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*, Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata* and White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata*. Recent studies in early 1994 have revealed the presence of several rare mammals including Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*, Tiger *P. tigris*, Red-shanked Douc Langur *Pygathrix nemaeus*, Gaur *Bos gaurus* and, most importantly, remains of Vu Quang Ox *Pseudoryx ngetinhensis* were obtained from local hunters, who reported that they regularly saw it in the area. Only described recently from Vietnam, this enigmatic mammal still remains unseen by any biologists.

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Dams Against Democracy?

Pro-democracy groups in Burma have revealed that the current ruling junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC) have commissioned feasibility studies to build a series of eight dams along its eastern border in cooperation with the Thai Government. One would be in peninsular Burma on the Kra River, Tenasserim Division. The other seven would be further north on four rivers, including one of the largest dams yet planned in South-East Asia on the Salween River. The alleged motivation for these projects is not just power and water for Thailand, but also the destruction of the last centres of Karen and other indigenous opposition to SLORC.

The conservation importance of these areas is little known and during the last six years the forests have become increasingly degraded, principally through the actions of Thai loggers. However, important Burmese areas under threat include parts of the Kahilu Wildlife Sanctuary, Karen/Kayah States - one of the few areas that is reportedly still intact due to the fierce fighting - and parts of the Pakchan Permanent Forest Reserve, Tenasserim Division. Pakchan was identified as a conservation priority by IUCN and FAO, and recommended for greater protection as a Wildlife Sanctuary or National Park as it contained some of the finest primary evergreen forest in Burma. However, it has reportedly now been severely deforested through logging concessions granted by SLORC to Thai companies. In Thailand itself, part of the Salaween Wildlife Sanctuary in Chiang Mai Province is also threatened.

CAMBODIA

Vietnamese Logging

During a recent visit to Song Be Province, WWF/BirdLife personnel found evidence of logging by Vietnamese contractors in adjoining Cambodia. Suspicions were aroused by the large numbers of logging trucks parked at the sides of the roads, in a province which has lost almost its entire natural forest cover! Contractors readily admitted to felling and removing timber from Cambodia but due to the rainy season their activities had been temporarily curtailed.

TAIWAN

Royal Wildlife Trade

The Taiwanese Government's attempted clampdown on illegal wildlife trade has resulted in the arrest of Princess Dekyi Wangchuck of Bhutan. She was caught last September entering Taiwan carrying US$750,000 of rhino horn and bear gall bladder, claiming she was ignorant of wildlife trade laws. Although the Princess was travelling on a diplomatic passport, Taiwan has no official relations with Bhutan and consequently in March 1994 the Taiwanese authorities sentenced her to ten months imprisonment.

THAILAND

New Boss for National Parks?

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) have submitted plans to assume control of a significant portion of Thailand's National Parks from The Royal Forestry Department. The minister in charge of tourism, Savit Bhotivihok, has plans to exploit the park's tourism potential with new hotels and restaurants. Objections from Thai environmentalists forced the government to put the issue on hold in mid-October 1993. However, it is expected to resurface soon as several parts of the TAT plan, including those governing park establishment and administration, are now pending.

Hope for Khao Sam Roi Yot?
A concerted effort by Thai conservation organisations has strengthened commitment to conserve Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park. With assistance from British counterparts, arrangements were made for key people involved to visit the U.K. Among them were Wijarn Witayasak (Director of Marine National Parks), Prawit Angsunark (District Officer of Kuiburi) and Piboon Sukitpraneeit (local business tycoon). They visited RSPB, BirdLife International and five wetland reserves in East Anglia. As a follow-up to the trip, a meeting was arranged on 7 October at Khao Sam Roi Yot. Here, agreement was reached to set up a working committee, comprising representatives from the local community, local and national government departments and national conservation NGOs.

Bangkok's First Nature Reserve
The Bangkok Metropolitan Authority propose to develop the nation's first urban nature reserve and education centre on the outskirts of Bangkok. Deputy Bangkok Governor Karoon Chandarangsu announced that they were considering a 500 rai (C. 50 ha) sanctuary in Suan Luang district, in order to increase environmental awareness and bird conservation in the city. They had initially planned to construct a water reservoir but were approached by conservationists to include a bird sanctuary. Mr Karoon said he did not think the heat and noise of Bangkok would deter the birds.

More Dam Protests
In December 1993 further demonstrations and confrontations took place involving Thai protesters against the World Bank funded Pak Mun Dam, on the Mun River a tributary of the Mekong in the north-east. The demonstrations have continued over resettlement issues and the dynamiting of the environmentally sensitive Tana rapids, which according to NGOs is in direct contravention of the World Bank agreed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). During the summer the site was visited by a World Bank mid-term review team, but they refused repeated invitations to meet local villagers and protestors on neutral ground, and consequently Thai NGOs have already declared this review a whitewash.

It is also reported that the Thai Government has been prospecting another new dam site. This time in the Mae Wong National Park, an important part of Thailand's remaining western forest complex. It is reported to have requested assistance in this from the World Bank.

Royal Reforestation
The Thai Government has announced an ambitious reforestation project, The aim is to rehabilitate by 1996, 5 million rai (c.800,000 ha) of denuded land in 59 provinces, primarily in the north and east of the country. The prospects for success are good as the project has been initiated to commemorate the 50th anniversary of King Bhumibol's coronation, and has the full backing of Queen Sirikit. Tawat Wichaidit, the Prime Minister's Secretary General declared, "We know this is an extremely ambitious project. But deforestation in Thailand has now gone beyond the tolerable stage". The project will be backed by private companies, each of whom will be allocated areas of denuded forest on which they will plant native saplings and pay villagers to look after them. No one will be allowed to live in these areas and the companies are prohibited from exploiting the trees they plant. Replanting will start in May 1994, King Bhumibol's 48th anniversary.

VIETNAM

New CITES Signatory
Vietnam acceded to the CITES convention on 20 January 1994, coming effective of 20 April 1994.

Further Threats to Mekong Delta Mangroves
The destruction of the mangrove forest of the Mekong Delta continues apace. Despite the replanting efforts of the Vietnamese Government, over the past few years shrimp-pond development has proceeded in an entirely unregulated manner and is now threatening the entire ecosystem. Demand for land is such that new settlers are building homes up to 5 km into the sea to stake their claim on currently submerged but rapidly accreting land. Of four bird colonies recently surveyed by WWF staff, only at one, Vo Doi, did protection measures seem adequate. At Cha Lat bird colony they caught nest robbers red-handed and recovered 30 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Javan Pond-Heron *Ardeola speciosa* nestlings which were destined for the cooking pot.

New Discoveries from Cat Loc

A survey by WWF/BirdLife of the proposed Cat Loc Nature Reserve, Dong Nai Province, found good populations of two restricted-range endemic bird species, Germain's Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron germaini* and Grey-faced Tit-Babbler *Macronous kelleyi*. The only other protected area from which these two species are known is the nearby Nam Cat Tien National Park. The team also discovered fresh Javan Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus* tracks. This indicates that the Rhinos remain in this area during the wet season, and do not move to higher ground in the adjoining Bao Loc District as had previously been supposed. The 35,000 ha proposed Cat Loc Nature Reserve is planned to be included in the expanded Nam Cat Tien National Park, but is threatened by shifting cultivation of local S'tieng tribal people and encroachment from ethnic Vietnamese settlers from the north. WWF is assisting the Lam Dong Provincial Forest Protection Department to establish a protected area infrastructure in Cat Loc, and will shortly launch an awareness programme amongst local villages.

Nam Cat Tien Under Threat

Nam Cat Tien National Park is threatened by government resettlement schemes. Thousands of rural poor from provinces in north Vietnam are being bussed into land adjoining the park to make new farms and villages. It is estimated that 10,000 people recently occupied lands in the Langa forest enterprise on the park's southern border. Many of these people are now illegally cutting timber inside the national park. The park protects the only remaining examples of lowland semi-evergreen and swamp forest in Vietnam and is important for populations of severally globally threatened species such as White-winged Duck *C. scutulata*, Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*, Germain's Peacock-Pheasant *P. germaini* and Grey-faced Tit-Babbler *Macronous kelleyi*.

Bengal Floricans Refound

Two Bengal Floricans *Eupodotis bengalensis* were recently observed in the "Plain of Reeds", Dong Thap Province. Discovered here in 1991, these are the most recent observations that confirm its continued presence in southern Vietnam. The birds were found in a fragment of suitable habitat of just 4km^2. Only small patches of such natural seasonally inundated grassland remain as virtually all the habitat has been converted to rice. The area is now under increasing pressure from growing numbers of landless ethnic Vietnamese returning from Cambodia. The only other site in the area from which Floricans are known is the Tram Chim National Park, but no large enough area of suitable habitat exists within the Park to support a population.

CHINA

New Site for Eyebrowed Parrotbill

A new site has been reported for the Eye-browed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis heudei* in northern China. The latest reports in *Dongwuxue Zazhi* (The Chinese Journal of Biology) concern the discovery of a breeding colony in reedbeds on the border of Linmu County in Shandong Province and Donghai County in Jiangsu Province. They were apparently fairly common, being seen in flocks of up to 50. [28: 44 (1993), in Chinese].

New Chinese Black-necked Crane population discovered

A previously unknown wintering population of Black-necked Cranes *Grus nigricollis* has been discovered in Yunnan province. The new site lies at about 2,700 m in Xundian county, in a remote, sparsely populated area around 100 km north-east of Kunming, the provincial capital, and is believed to be the southernmost in China. The researchers from Yunnan University, who visited the site in April 1993, do not seem to have seen many, if any, cranes themselves but they were shown skins of birds shot by peasants, and after interviewing local people they concluded that about 300 to 400 Black-necked Cranes winter in the area.

However, another report on this species gives some bad news. The wintering flock in the Zhaotong area, about 300 km to the north of Xundian (see *O.B.C. Bull.* 12), is said to be under severe threat. Peasants desperate for firewood in this bleak, mountainous region have been felling trees indiscriminately, and much of the area is now treeless. Together with overgrazing by livestock, and the digging of peat and harvesting of reeds for fuel, this has caused severe mudslides and siltation of the wetlands used by the cranes, which are also illegally hunted. At another site, Dahaiba, where about 300 Black-necked Cranes overwinter, half of the marshes has been drained and turned into arable land. The author concludes that better educational work is necessary to make local people aware of the importance of China's Wildlife Protection Laws, and proposes the establishment of a Black-necked Crane reserve in the area.

Browneared-Pheasants under threat in China

The population of Browneared-Pheasants *Crossoptilon mantchuricum*, which was recently discovered near Beijing (see *O.B.C. Bull. 12*) is now estimated at between 200 and 500 birds. The new site, Dongling Shan, lies only about 100 km west of the city centre, and is threatened by plans to build a mine in the area, according to researchers Li Xiangtao and Kui Yongxin of the Beijing Natural History Museum. Dongling Shan is the highest peak in Beijing municipality, reaching an altitude of 2,303 m, but the pheasants are found on the lower slopes between 1,000 m and 2,000 m, rather than at the sparsely vegetated peak. They are commonest at 1,200 to 1,500 m, and nests have been found at 1,300 to 1,400 m. These altitudes are significantly lower than those occupied by this species in Hebei and Shanxi provinces.

In Hebei, the Browneared-Pheasant population at Xiaowutai Shan is estimated at between 1,000 and 2,000 birds, while total numbers in Shanxi are put at around 3,000 (1,000 at Pangquangou and 2,000 at Luyashan), giving a national total of around 5,000. The Shanxi population is under heavy pressure from peasants who gather shaji (sand thorn) berries, an important component of the pheasants' winter diet, and livestock grazing is degrading their habitat. The authors express concern about the possible genetic consequences of the species breeding in only a handful of isolated sites, perhaps responsible for a report that in 1992 only two eggs out of nine hatched from a nest at Dongling Shan. Few details are given of current hunting pressure on the species, but in the 1960s hundreds were killed each month. There is also evidence for significant trade in the species, as 200 birds being exported via the port of Tianjin were confiscated in 1972 and given to the Beijing Natural History Museum as specimens.

More Saunders's Gull colonies found in north China

A survey carried out in June 1993 by Chinese researchers, in association with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), has yielded important new information on breeding colonies of the globally threatened Saunders's Gull *L. saundersi* in Bohai Bay, eastern China. The survey began in Shandong province and worked its way north to Hebei and Liaoning. A total of 663 birds, including 29 immatures, was found at 12 sites, including four breeding areas. The area around the Yellow River estuary in northern Shandong had the largest numbers, totalling 427 birds but including only six immatures; these included 200 at the Guangli estuary and 184 at Diaokou. In Liaoning, 193 birds ,including 23 immatures, were recorded at the Daling estuary, a few kilometres west of Shuangtaizi, while 39 adults were noted at the Luan He estuary in Hebei.

A total of 21 nests were discovered, including eight empty nests on June 27 at the Daling estuary; the chicks had already left but signs of their droppings were seen. Seven nests with a total of 18 eggs (one to three per clutch) were found at the Guangli estuary, and two nests were discovered at the nearby Xintiao estuary. Four nests with 10 eggs (including one with a clutch of six) were found at the Luan He estuary.

The authors of an article about the survey, from the Liaoning Ornithological Study Centre and the WWF, report that much of the north China coast is under threat from land reclamation and the building of shrimp ponds, endangering the mudflats where Saunders's Gulls breed, and that none of the four nesting sites they studied is inside a nature reserve. In addition, the official Xinhua news agency reported last year that in the 1990s the economy of the Bohai Bay region in Hebei, with a population of 18 million, is set to grow by 14 per cent annually, two to three per cent higher than the provincial average. The implications for wildlife are serious, and it is unclear to what extent environmental concerns are being taken into account by the region's economic planners.

Sources

New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), *The Pioneer* (Delhi), *Bangkok Post*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The Ecologist*, *New Scientist*, Associated Press, Reuters, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Traffic Bulletin*, Environet, Malaysian Nature Society, Jonathan Eames, Ross Hughes, John Parr, Phil Round, Richard Thewlis. News from China was contributed by Michael Rank. Please contact OBC if you would like more information on the news sources.

Little-known Oriental bird

Grey-crowned Crocias *Crocias langbianis*

The first draft of this article had to undergo substantial changes, but for good reason – its subject had been found by the author and Dr Nguyen Cu. Jonathan Eames reports on the original discovery of this very rare babbler its frustrating non-reappearance for 56 years, and the drama of its rediscovery in early 1994.

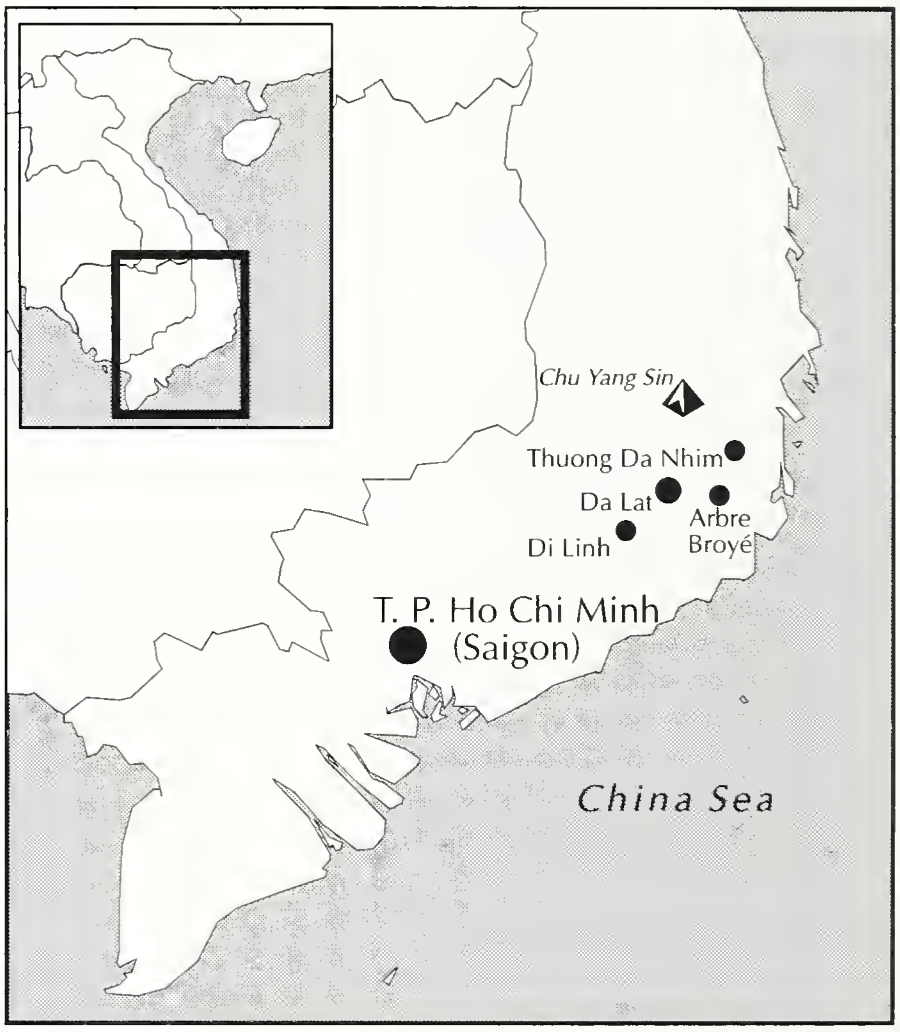
On 5 April 1938 whilst collecting bird specimens near Da Lat in what is today Lam Dong Province, Vietnam, the young Swedish ornithologist Bertil Björkegren obtained a male and female of a hitherto unknown bird species. On 12 April he obtained another female. These specimens were sent to the Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm, where Count Nils Gyldenstolpe formally described them as a new species *Crocias langbianis*[5]. What is both odd and intriguing are the circumstances surrounding the collection and documentation of this new bird, the fact that it was not recorded earlier and that it was only finally rediscovered a few months ago.

Bertil Björkegren first visited French Indochina in 1935 for approximately two months and collected in Vietnam and Cambodia, after which he despatched 65 bird specimens to Stockholm. He returned to Vietnam in February or March 1938 for a more lengthy stay and remained until April 1939. (A full account of his expeditions and the bird specimens he obtained is currently in preparation[3]).

Following his arrival in 1938 he travelled to Da Lat stopping at Di Linh en route (Figure 1). His haste to reach Da Lat may have been to enjoy its temperate climate and so recover from the food poisoning he had experienced aboard the *Bernadin de St. Pierre*. More likely the urge to begin collecting birds in this fascinating centre of endemism was too great to resist!

Björkegren was a good correspondent and frequently wrote to his mentor and sponsor Count Nils Gyldenstolpe, on whose behalf he had undertaken the expedition. By late March 1938 Björkegren had arrived in Da Lat and wrote to Gyldenstolpe of the delays he had experienced obtaining the necessary permissions required to begin his work; a frustration compounded when he discovered that the French administration had wisely banned hunting on the Da Lat (Langbian) Plateau. After a short delay, spent in search of big-game with a French railway officer and his wife, Björkegren finally obtained permission to collect birds and smaller mammals. By 31 March 1938 he had amassed a collection of 50 birds and ten mammal species. To assist him in this task, he engaged two of Jean Delacour's preparators. The older man remained at home and prepared skins, while the younger man assisted Björkegren in the field shooting specimens.

Figure 1. Map of Vietnam showing the location of the places mentioned in the text

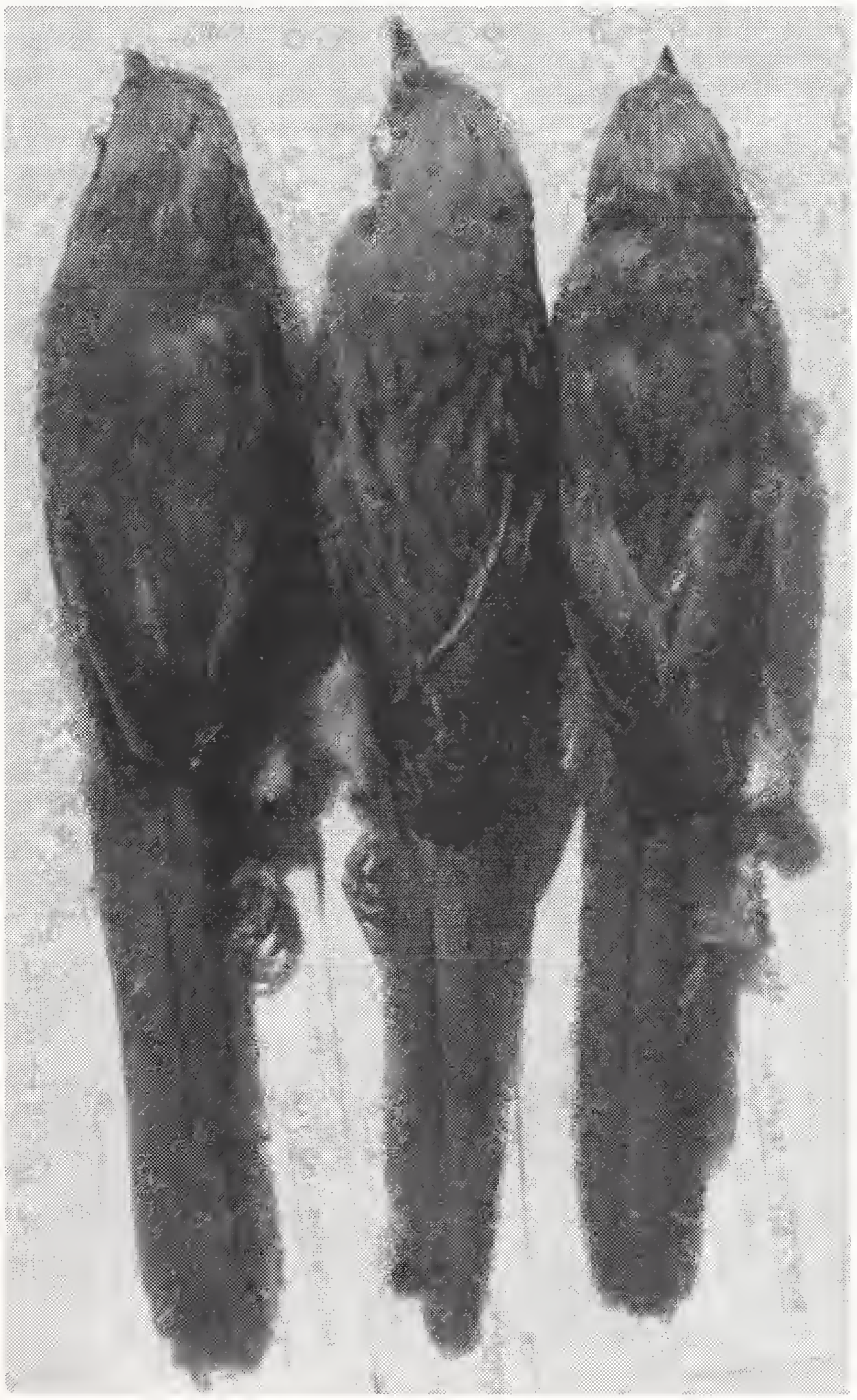


I believe that Björkegren remained in Da Lat from the 2 April to at least 7 April 1938 and had moved east to Arbre Broyé by 11 April, but had returned to Da Lat by 14 April. On 7 April Björkegren wrote a letter to Count Gyldenstolpe which frustratingly provides no hint as to his precise whereabouts on 5 April: "This last week I have settled down and have found a promising locality for birds. Daytime I am shooting and nights I dream about birds. Between 15 and 20 birds fall every day as ripe fruit from the trees." His collecting journal, now unfortunately lost, would provide the only clue to the whereabouts of Björkegren and his collector on the critical dates of 5 and 12 April.

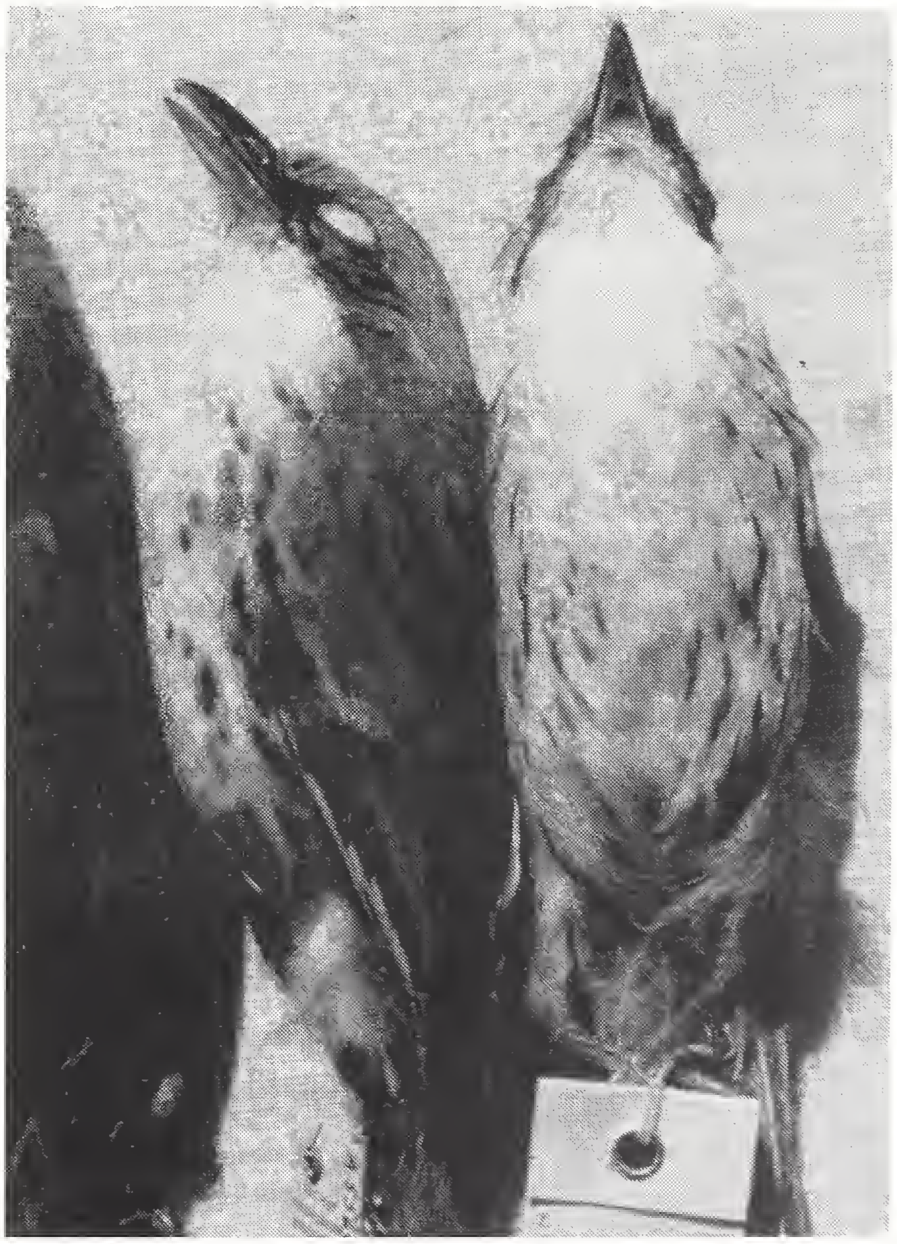
Other than stating their collecting locality as "S[outh]. Annam, Da Lat," the three specimens provide no further clue as to the precise locality, forest-type or altitude at which they were obtained. Few additional clues are provided by the other bird specimens collected on 5 and 12 April. On 5 April Björkegren obtained two Collared Laughingthrushes *Garrulax yersini* and two Cutias *Cutia nipalensis*, both of which are inhabitants of evergreen forest. Collared Laughingthrush has not been recorded below 5,000 ft [1,500 m] whilst Cutia is usually recorded above 4,000 ft [1,200 m][7]. On the same day he also collected Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus* and Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, two species which are generally found in *Pinus khaysi* forest and sometimes mixed pine-evergreen forest. This suggests that he and / or his companion were collecting in evergreen forest not lower than 1,200 m and also ventured into pine forest that day. He collected two Yellow-billed Nuthatches *Sitta solangiae* on 12 April, again suggesting that he was collecting in evergreen forest and could not have been collecting below 1,330 m.

The only other hint regarding the altitudinal range and habitat of this species was provided by its congener the Spotted Crocias *C. albonotatus*, which is a canopy bird found in mixed species flocks in the montane forest of west Java[6]. This at least gave us a hypothetical insight to the probable basic ecology of *C. langbianis*: that it was likely to be an arboreal flocking babbler inhabiting evergreen forest above 1,200 m.

Several additional anomalies remain which add further intrigue to the Grey-crowned Crocias enigma. Firstly, why did Björkegren not realise the significance of the three specimens, which were only identified and described in Stockholm? The



a)



b)

The only specimens of Grey-crowned Crocias Crocias langbianis, *all collected by Bertil Björkegren in April 1938: a) upperside; b) underside and side profile (Photos: Jonathan Eames)* answer may lie in his lost collecting journal, and hence never be made clear.

Although Björkegren was young and relatively inexperienced at the time, it is evident from his letters that he had a fairly good grasp of ornithology and knowledge of birds. He frequently cited subspecific names in his correspondence with Gyldenstolpe, although he did write on 7 April 1938: "I have no time for a close determination but I take aside what I can recognise in Delacour's and [Stuart] Baker's books." It is possible that in his haste to obtain more specimens for his collection he may not have realised that he had collected an unknown species, but this is surprising when part of his quest was the discovery of new species.

It is also surprising that C. *langbianis* had not been discovered previously, as the forests of the Da Lat Plateau had been subject to intensive collecting before Björkegren's trip. Collectors including Robinson and Kloss in 1918[8] and Delacour and Jabouille in 1927[2] failed to discover this species in the environs of Da Lat. Following Björkegren, Brunel[1] frequently visited the area during his three year sojourn in South Vietnam between 1958 and 1961, while more recent intensive survey work also failed to find the species[4,8,10].

My own failure to find C. *langbianis* led me to consider several improbable scenarios: that the deforestation which has occurred in the area since 1938 had resulted in the bird's extinction; that the specimens came from a locality elsewhere in Indochina, or that they were from another collection entirely and became mixed-up in Stockholm. These last two possibilities could be dismissed since Björkegren was undoubtedly aware of Gyldenstolpe's type description and if there was any doubt that the Crocias were taken on the Da Lat Plateau, this would have been mentioned in later in correspondence. Only complete frustration and desperation led me to consider these bizarre improbabilities and my determination to resolve the enigma grew stronger than ever!

In December 1993 Dr Nguyen Cu and I, together with a team of botanists, returned to the Da Lat Plateau to undertake surveys (see acknowledgements) in the Thuong Da Nhim Nature Reserve. Although my colleagues and I spent three weeks in the field the weather was poor, making fieldwork difficult and often impossible for days on end, with torrential rain and gale-force winds lashing our camp. Although we found the other three bird species endemic to the plateau, we once again failed to find the Crocias.

The following month, we moved north to survey Chu Yang Sin which at 2,442 m is the highest peak on the plateau. No previous ornithological exploration had been undertaken on Chu Yang Sin and it seemed to offer a final chance to find the *Crocias*. Fieldwork soon established that, although the avifauna of Chu Yang Sin was representative of the Da Lat Plateau Endemic Bird Area, there were clearly several distinctions from the rest of the plateau; some species such as Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata* and Vietnamese Greenfinch *Carduelis monguilloti* were apparently absent, yet three species not recently recorded on the plateau namely Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta*, White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana* and Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis* were present. These discoveries kept the hope alive that we would find the Crocias but, alas, after three weeks of fieldwork there was no sign.

On 29 January, we finally left our camp for the two day walk back to the nearest village. The day had started badly as our porters had failed to meet us at our camp the previous evening, and we were forced to abandon some food and equipment and carry increased personal loads. After an hour of walking, we finally met them on the trail and lightening our packs enabled closer scrutiny of bird flocks en route. We descended from 1,500 m to 1,010 m and at c.16h15 Dr Nguyen Cu and I stopped to look at an unusually large flock of White-cheeked Laughingthrushes *Garrulax vassali*, numbering more than 50 birds. My attention was then distracted by a separate bird wave in the canopy. Then suddenly an apparition – a large, slim, arboreal babbler with a white breast, spotted flanks and a long graduated tail. Crocias! Then there were two together, but they disappeared as the flock, also containing Green Magpie *Cissa chinensis* and Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii*, moved quickly away. We gave pursuit and with quivering hands and pounding hearts, eventually obtained good views of the species when the flock paused to feed before roosting. Finally, we lost the flock in the poor light of the gathering dusk. We relocated what was probably the same flock the following day, but there was no sign of the Crocias. Like many of life's most thrilling experiences, first views of *Crocias langbianis* for 56 years were only brief.

A single sighting of a long-missing species may be an exciting event, but it does not, of course, imply that its survival is assured. Fortunately, the government of Vietnam has resolved to establish Chu Yang Sin as a protected area and work on a management plan is already underway. Unlike many protected areas in Vietnam, Chu Yang Sin does not face the immediate threats of encroachment or hunting, offering hope that a protected area infrastructure can be established before any potential land-use conflicts arise. This my be the best prospect for the conservation of *Crocias langbianis* and the other endemic fauna and flora of the Da Lat Plateau.

Acknowledgements

I owe a great debt of thanks to Dr Per Ericson, Curator of Birds at the Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm, for kindly allowing me access to Björkegren's collection and correspondence from the museum archives. Thanks are also due to Ms. Britt-Marie Lindkvist for patiently translating correspondence from the original Swedish to English. I would also like to thank the trustees of the Swedish Museum of Natural History for providing accommodation during my stay in Stockholm in 1993. In addition I would like to thank Dr Per Ericson, Tim Inskipp and Richard Grimmett for commenting on earlier drafts of this text.

The fieldwork which facilitated the rediscovery of *Crocias langbianis* was undertaken whilst I was an employee of BirdLife International on secondment to The World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) Vietnam Programme as Project Executant of WWF Project VN0008 – Development of a Protected Area System. I would also like to acknowledge the Forest Protection Department of the Ministry of Forestry and the Provincial Forest Protection Departments of Lam Dong and Dak Lak for facilitating this work. Finally I would like to thank my colleagues, Dr Nguyen Cu, Hoang Ngoc Long, Nguyen Duy Chinh, Nong Van Tiep, Dinh Van Ty, Nguyen Va Qui, Tran Hong Chut and Ngoc Quang Qui for their hard work and good company during fieldwork.

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Jonathan Eames and Dr Nguyen Cu on the summit of Chu Yang Sin

Birdwatching areas

Caohai (The Sea of Grass)and Tuoda Forest, China

Information is presented in this and the accompanying article on the Caohai wetland and Tuoda forest, two areas that have been rarely visited by foreign birdwatchers. Most people will want to go to the wetland in mid-winter to witness the large concentrations of waterfowl and cranes, but a visit to the forest in spring or summer could also be exciting and rewarding.

Caohai (The Sea of Grass) lies at an altitude of 2,200 m among the bare hills of the Yunnan–Guizhou Plateau in south-west China. It is best known as a wintering site for over 300 **Black-necked Cranes** *Grus nigricollis* as well as a variety of waterfowl, including at least seventeen species of duck.

Caohai is an oval-shaped lake, approximately 10 km by 5 km, and is surrounded by fields cultivated for maize and root vegetables, mainly potatoes. The lake was drained entirely during the Cultural Revolution, but a small dam was built about 15 years ago, and water is now present all year round. In 1983 hunting was banned and the Caohai Nature Reserve formally established. The reserve management has about 20 wardens among the villages around the lake. In two visits in December 1990 and December 1991 we neither saw nor heard any evidence of hunting and the birds were very confiding. There are other smaller lakes or reservoirs nearby, which are worth investigating and a site for the rare **Reeves's Pheasant** *Syrmaticus reevesi* is a day trip away at Tuoda.

The reserve area and the surrounding Weining County are still 'closed' to foreigners and visits can be arranged only through the Guizhou Province Environmental Protection Bureau. Their visitor centre, at the edge of Weining town, overlooks the lake from the north-east and viewing from the balcony offers good opportunities to observe the lake's birds.

Due to the altitude of the area the winter weather tends to be clearer than elsewhere in Guizhou Province, which has a general reputation for being cloudy and wet. In late December the temperature drops below freezing at night but can rise to 15-18°C on sunny afternoons. However, as we discovered with a vengeance one morning, the arrival of a cold front can keep temperatures several degrees below freezing all day.

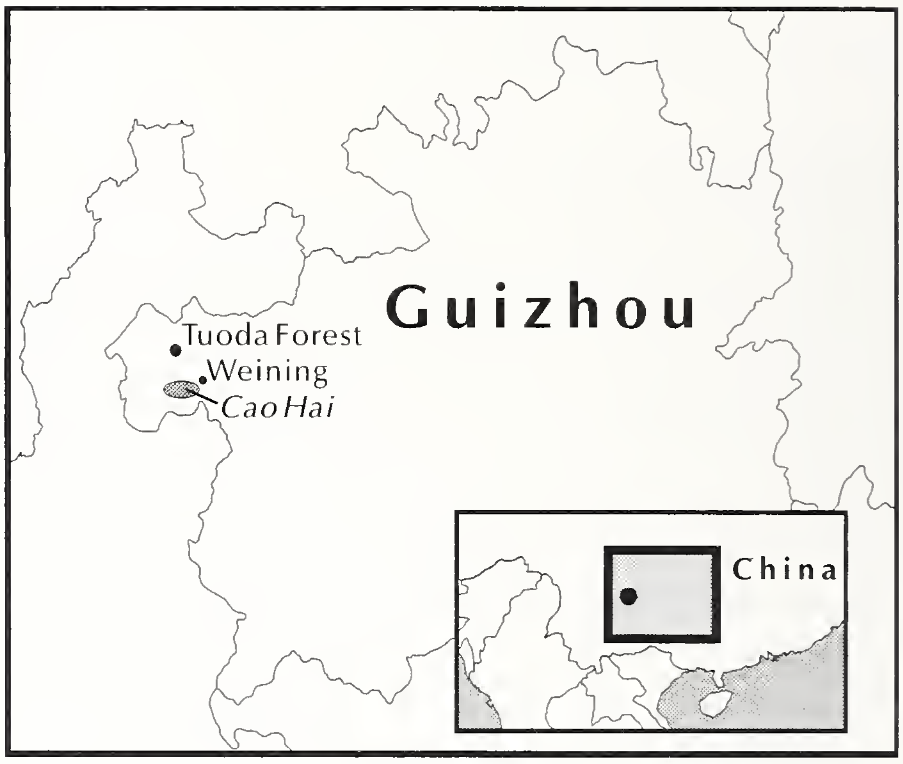

Figure 1. Caohai area, showing locations mentioned in the text

Getting there

Most visitors to Caohai will approach the area over a 3,000 m pass from the town of Liu Pan Shui (literally "Six buckets of water"). There are spectacular views of the karst limestone mountains from the road. On the descent from Liu Pan Shui to Weining **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*, **Chinese Babax** *Babax lanceolatus* and **Elliot's Laughingthrush** *Garrulax elliotii* have been seen. Common along the roadside are **Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus auroreus* and **Yellow-throated Bunting** *Emberiza elegans*. The most obvious birds are large flocks of **Daurian Jackdaws** *Corvus dauuricus*, with both dark and white-phase birds being present.

On a clear morning the lake is best viewed from the terraced fields around the village of Bo Ji Wan, as the sun is behind you. Rafts of **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* and **Eurasian Wigeon** *A. penelope* are interspersed with smaller groups of **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*. Present in smaller numbers are **Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata*, **Ferruginous Pochard** *Aythya nyroca* and **Red-**

1

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Plate 1. Caohai Lake looking west from Bo Ji Wan (Photo: John Holmes).

Plate 2. Caohai is a wintering site for over 300 **Black-necked Cranes** *Grus nigricollis* (Photo: John Holmes).

Plate 3. Flocks of **Bar-headed Geese** *Anser indicus* are characteristic of Caohai in winter (Photo: John Holmes).

Plate 4. Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus* (Photo: Patrick Beirens

Nikon The inclusion of colour on pages 23, 26, 38 and 43 has been subsidised by support from Nikon UK Ltd.

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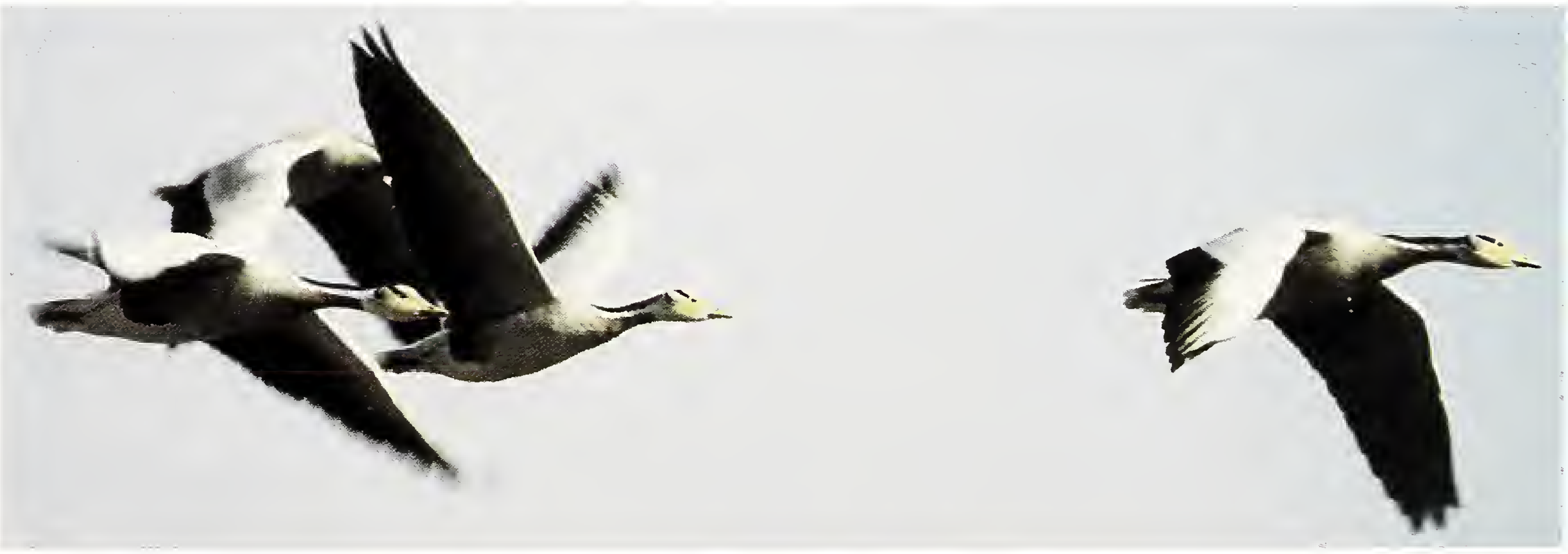

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crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. We estimated a total of 20,000 waterfowl of 31 species to be present in December 1991.

Family parties of both **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* and **Black-necked Crane** feed among the partly submerged fields at the water's edge. In suitable weather conditions it is possible to take a punt both close inshore and out towards the middle of the lake, which is generally shallow. This presents excellent photo opportunities.

Our hosts told us that the total of **Black-necked Crane** in winter 1991 was 396, the highest since the reserve was established. There are also hundreds of **Common Crane** present between mid-November and mid-March. Another characteristic species of the area in winter is the **Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus*, and they are most confiding, it being possible to approach the flocks in the open to within 40 m.

The villages around the lake have hedgerows and windbreaks consisting of stands of pine or bamboo. Common birds of this habitat are **White-browed Laughingthrush** *Garrulax sannio* and **Brown-breasted Bulbul** *Pycononotus xanthorrhous*. Severe weather will drive **Orange-flanked Bush-Robins** *Tarsiger cyanurus* and **Lemon-rumped Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus* off the hills and into these areas. Small numbers of **White-collared Yuhinas** *Yuhina diademata* and flocks of **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* and both **Grey-capped** *Carduelis sinica* and **Black-headed Greenfinches** *C. ambigua* are also possible. **Grey-faced Woodpeckers** *Picus canus* are common despite the absence of mature trees, and sometimes can be seen searching the eaves of houses for food. A number of **Eurasian Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* are present in winter.

Raptors in the Caohai area include **Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* and more commonly **Black-eared Kite** *Milvus lineatus*. **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* and **Common Kestrel** *F. tinnunculus* are fairly numerous but the outstanding raptor is **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*. Up to three birds were noted in front of Bo Ji Wan village in December 1991.

In theory, an area of about 50 km^2 – about one-third of the Caohai basin – has been declared a nature reserve, but its boundaries have been poorly defined. As reported in *OBC Bull.* 16, the wetland is under serious threat from reclamation and an uncontrolled building boom. The lake is apparently shrinking, now averaging only 0.6 m to 1.0 m deep and covering just 10 km^2. And if these problems was not enough, industrial pollution is also increasing with over 700 primitive zinc furnaces in the area.

A key factor in saving Caohai could be tourism, and encouragingly the authorities want to attract foreign tourists to Guizhou, a province that was closed to foreigners until a few years ago. By 1995, 200,000 foreigners are expected to visit Guizhou, and although tourism can of course create its own pressures and pollution, perhaps some can be encouraged to come to Caohai. Although it is not nearly as grand a spectacle as China's best known winter waterfowl site, Po Yang Lake in Jiangxi Province, the birds (especially the cranes and geese) are far more confiding. People wishing to include the area in a winter trip to China may write in English or Chinese to: Guizhou Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau, No. 83, Zun Yi Road, Guiyang, Peoples Republic of China.

John Holmes, 20 Hang Tau Village, Sheung Shui, New Territories, Hong Kong.

Tuoda (also Toada or Tuode) Forest Farm

Tuoda Forest consists of a plantation of deciduous and evergreen trees dominated by the oak *Quercus variabilis* in the hills about 60 km north-west of Weining, at an estimated altitude of 2750 m. Although the primary forest has been felled, there are still good areas of secondary forest. A number of staff are employed there as it is a forestry reserve. It is one of the last strongholds of **Reeves's Pheasant**. A study of the species was funded in part by an OBC survey grant (see more details of this study in *OBC Bull.18*). Additionally avifaunal surveys were conducted in the forest in January and December 1988, September and November 1991 and April to July 1992. The survey results show that the forest is still rich in bird species including some which are rare of have restricted ranges. Below we list the species recorded with details of their status within the area.

Silver Oriole Oriolus mellianus *by Craig Robson*

Bird species recorded in the Tuoda forest area

Key: R=resident; B=breeding; S=summer; M=migrants; W=winter.

Japanese Quail *Coturnix japonica*	M
Reeves's Pheasant *Syrmaticus reevesi*	R
Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*	R
Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*	R
Common Teal *Anas crecca*	W
Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*	W
Grey-capped Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*	R
Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*	R
Grey-faced Woodpecker *Picus canus*	R
Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*	R
Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*	R
Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*	B
Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus sparverioides*	B
Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*	B
Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus*	B
Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*	S
House Swift *Apus nipalensis*	B
Collared Scops-Owl *Otus sunia*	R
Indian Scops-Owl *Otus bakkamoena*	R
Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus*	B
Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*	R
Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*	R
Red Collared-Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*	R
White-bellied Green-Pigeon *Treron sieboldii*	R
Common Crane *Grus grus*	W
Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*	W
Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*	W
Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*	W
Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*	R
Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus*	W
Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*	W
Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*	W
Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*	W
Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*	W
Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*	R
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*	B
Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*	S
Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*	R
Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*	B
Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*	R
Red-billed Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*	R
Black-billed Magpie *Pica pica*	R
Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*	R
Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*	R
Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*	R
Collared Crow *Corvus torquatus*	R
Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*	B
Silver Oriole *Oriolus mellianus*	BM
Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina melaschistos*	B
Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*	B
Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*	S
Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*	S
Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*	S
Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*	R
Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*	B
Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*	R
Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myiophonus caeruleus*	R
Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*	W
Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*	M
Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*	W
Chinese Thrush *Turdus mupinensis*	R
Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea*	M
Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*	B
Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*	M
Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*	B
Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*	B
Orange-flanked Bush-Robin *Tarsiger cyanurus*	W
Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*	R
Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus auroreus*	R
Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*	R
White-capped Water-Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*	R
Plumbeous Water-Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*	R
White-bellied Redstart *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*	R
White-tailed Robin *Cinclidium leucurum*	R
White-crowned Forktail *Enicurus leschenaulti*	R
Purple Cochoa *Cochoa purpurea*	R
Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*	R
Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea*	R
Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus*	R
Chestnut-vented Nuthatch *Sitta nagaensis*	R
Yunnan Nuthatch *Sitta yunnanensis*	R
Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*	R
Fire-capped Tit *Cephalopyrus flammiceps*	R
Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*	R
Coal Tit *Parus ater*	R
Great Tit *Parus major*	R
Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*	R
Black-browed Tit *Aegithalos iouschistos*	R
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*	B
Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*	B
Northern House-Martin *Delichon urbica*	B
Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*	R
Brown-breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous*	R
Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata*	R
Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler *Cettia fortipes*	R
Buff-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus subaffinis*	B
Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*	M
Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*	W
Inornate Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*	W
Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*	M
Blyth's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*	M
Golden-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus burkii*	R
White-browed Laughingthrush *Garrulax sannio*	R
Elliot's Laughingthrush *Garrulax elliotii*	R
Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrocnemis*	R
Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*	R
Chinese Babax *Babax lanceolatus*	R
Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*	R
Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta*	R
Spectacled Fulvetta *Alcippe ruficapilla*	R
Streak-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe cinereiceps*	R
Rusty-capped Fulvetta *Alcippe dubia*	R
Black-headed Sibia *Heterophasia melanoleuca*	R
White-collared Yuhina *Yuhina diademata*	R
Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta*	R
Spot-breasted Parrotbill *Paradoxornis guttaticollis*	R
Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*	R
Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae*	R
Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*	R
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*	R
White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*	R
Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*	M
Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*	W
Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*	MW
Black-headed Greenfinch *Carduelis ambigua*	R
Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*	B
Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus*	R
Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria*	WM
Godlewski's Bunting *Emberiza godlewskii*	R
Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*	R
Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*	W
Yellow-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans*	B

5

6

7

8

Purple Cochoa Cochoa purpurea *by Craig Robson*

In addition to **Reeves's Pheasant** there are four other globally threatened species (as listed in *Birds to Watch*), namely **Black-necked Crane**, **Silver Oriole** *Oriolus mellianus*, **Purple Cochoa** *Cochoa purpurea* and **Yunnan Nuthatch** *Sitta yunnanensis*. The cranes are regularly seen flying over or feeding in small marshland areas near to the forest in winter. The oriole, cochoa and nuthatch are known in Tuoda forest only from single records and thus their status is unclear: an adult male **Silver Oriole** was collected on 26 September 1991; one **Purple Cochoa** was seen on 5 November 1991; two **Yunnan Nuthatches** were seen feeding on 25 November 1987. The cochoa has also been collected at Xilang mountain on 18 October 1975 which is about 20 km from Tuoda, and two specimens of the nuthatch were collected in Shuichen county, which lies to the south-east of Tuoda.

Plate 5. A view of Tuoda forest in the winter (Photo: John Holmes).
Plate 6. **Godlewski's Bunting** *Emberiza godlewskii*, which is often regarded as conspecific with **Rock Bunting** *E. cia*, is resident around Tuoda forest (Photo: John Holmes).
Plate 7. The striking **White-browed Laughingthrush** *Garrulax sannio* is a common resident in the area (Photo: John Holmes).
Plate 8. Female **Reeve's Pheasant** *Syrmaticus reevesi* on her nest (Photo: Wu Zhikang).

Wu Zhikang, Li Zhumei, Yu Zhigang, and Jang Hong, Guizhou Institute of Biology, Xiaohe, Guiyang, Guizhou, 550009, China.

The work of Wu Zhikang, Li Zhumei, Yu Zhigang, and Jang Hong enabled recommendations to be made to the Chinese authorities to establish a nature reserve, primarily aimed at protecting the Reeves's Pheasant. An area of 20.33 km² was identified as suitable for the reserve, including a central core area of 5.33 km² where the forest is still in relatively good condition.

On 14 March 1992, the Weining Autonomous government approved the recommendations and the establishment of the Tuoda Nature Reserve.

Traditionally the area has been run by the Guizhou Forestry Bureau as a foresty exploitation area. Tuoda is one of the last remaining forest areas in north-west Guizhou, although much of this region was formally forested. It is now a forest oasis in a region which now has a desert-like landscape. Mark Beaman visited the area recently and states that pressures to exploit Tuoda's forests are still great. Additionally Ben King reported in an article published by the World Pheasant Association that the woods were full of local people collecting firewood, dry leaves and chopping down trees during his visit in 1987. He noticed that many trees had about two metres of their bark stripped to kill them.

Clearly the establishment of the Tuoda Nature Reserve is a major step forward towards safeguarding the area and notably the population of Reeves's Pheasant. Let's hope that the pressures on Tuoda can be controlled so that continuing forest exploitation will be sustainable. Encouragingly, Dr Wu Zhikang reports that programmes for conservation are now in progress. The Editorial Committee would like to thank Mark Beaman for reviewing the species list Eds.

The colourful world of woodpeckers: an Oriental perspective

Thors will publish shortly a new guide to the identification of the world's woodpeckers. Here they desrcibe the striking colouration found within the group and discuss the considerable variation found within the flamebacks.

Woodpeckers possess a combination of morphological, physiological and behavioural adaptations which makes them unique in the world[2]. They can excavate holes of various shapes into dead and living wood, allowing them to hunt for wood-boring insects. They can construct their own nest holes, making them keystone species of the world's forests (with the exception of the Australasian region) because so many other animals have come to rely on their vacated holes for successful reproduction. They have overcome the forces of gravity for climbing and resting on vertical surfaces by having toes which are directed forwards and outwards and are armed with strong claws, and a stiff tail, which keeps the body away from the substrate, while serving as a prop when stationary. They also possess tongues which can be extended far beyond the bill, barbed at the tip and made sticky by a special set of glands, enabling them to capture food from crevices and tunnels made by insects.

The combination of these features is indeed unique, and together they contribute to the distinct character of the whole family of more than 200 species. But another less appreciated distinction is their striking colouration. Most woodpecker species are prominently coloured, in contrast to many other members of the bark-foraging guild such as woodcreepers (Dendrocolaptidae) and creepers (Certhiidae, Climacteridae), which tend to be inconspicuously clad.

Plumage colouration

The plumage of woodpeckers is usually rich in bright colours. In many species black and white patterns dominate, with the presence or absence of, or the extent of, red parts on the head distinguishing males from females. In general, woodpecker colouration obeys the broad rule that bright birds live in dark habitats. There are some exceptions, though, such as the uniformly and inconspicuously coloured Maroon *Blythipicus rubiginosus* and Bay Woodpeckers *B. pyrrhotis* which forage in the gloomy lower tiers of South-East Asian forests.

There are still many open questions about woodpecker colouration. Why is sexual dimorphism well developed in some species and almost non-existent in others? Why do the crowns of juveniles in some species, for example in the Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major,* exhibit more red than even adult males? If the red possibly functions as appeasement of the parents, why should males have more red than females? Many of the answers may be connected with another life-history trait of woodpeckers: namely, that males usually put more effort into nest construction and incubation, and sometimes also brooding and brood-feeding, than females. In such cases the female should tend to be more active in courtship[4]. Indeed, most copulations are initiated by the female, and in various American melanerpine species and the Middle Spotted Woodpecker *D. medius* the female mounts the male apparently to stimulate copulation.

Red on the head is usually indicative of maleness either by the greater extent of red shown or by its presence as opposed to its absence. There are, however, several species in which there is hardly any sexual difference, including in the Oriental region the widespread Brown-capped *D. moluccensis,* and Grey-capped*D. canicapillus* Woodpeckers and the Pygmy Woodpecker *D. kizuki* of Japan. In all these species, the red is reduced to a tiny 'badge' at the lower margin of the crown (note though that the males of *D. canicapillus semicoronatus* of north India and the Himalayas show much more red).

Plumage variation

The story of woodpecker colouration does not end there, as many woodpecker species consist of a number of subspecies which are often clearly recognisable in the field.

The Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus* exhibits spectacular latitudinal variation within its considerable range from Alaska to Panama: large black-and-white patterned birds inhabit northern coniferous forest, whereas small brown forms live in the tropical montane oak forests of Central America. The record-holder in woodpecker geographical variation is, however, an Oriental species[5].

The Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* occurs across southern Asia from the Indian subcontinent to the Sundas and the Philippines. The extent of its plumage variation (as well as its size variation) is such that the observer could be forgiven for thinking that there were half-a-dozen or more separate species involved, especially as the differences are in many cases far greater and infinitely more obvious than those which exist between other forms that are treated as separate species (including within the woodpecker family). Some of this racial variation is shown in Plate 1. The genus contains a second species, the White-naped Woodpecker *C. festivus*, which is restricted to India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and shows barely any variation within its range, and is immediately separated at all times from the Greater Flameback by its fully white hindneck and the large white 'triangle' on its mantle.

Apart from the rump, which is always crimson-red, the basic colour of the Greater Flameback's upperparts in the north, west and central parts of its range (from north-west India across to Indonesia) is golden-green or olive, but in Sri Lanka the subspecies *stricklandi* has the entire upperparts red.

In general terms the face is white with a broad black eye-stripe, the hindneck white/whitish; there are two thin black moustachial stripes, and the underparts are black and white.

In the Philippines, however, all this changes, with an incredible array of different forms. There are male flamebacks with back and wings golden-green (Balabac to the Calamian Islands), dark red or mixed red and gold (Mindanao and Basilan), or decidedly dark red (other islands). The variation is no less striking in head, neck and breast markings: the head is entirely red and the neck evenly striped black and white (Balabac to the Calamians), or the face and upper breast are buffy red with darker streaks (Basilan and Mindanao), or the sides of the head and the entire underparts are bright yellow and (except for the breast) unmarked (Negros, Guimaras, Panay, Masbate and Ticao), whereas on other islands the head and neck are reddish buff with reddish moustache or black and white with no obvious moustache.

It is by no means only the male Greater Flameback that exhibits such extensive plumage variations. Although females generally have a black crown with white or whitish spots, those in east Java (where males, incidentally, have a noticeable buffish tinge to the face) have a golden-yellow or even orange crown; in the Philippines, there is again an array of head colours and patterns ranging from black with a white-spotted crown to reddish and even entirely yellow, females generally reflecting the colouration (though usually much watered-down) of their respective males.

What makes the plumage variation within the Greater Flameback complex even more interesting is that there is another genus of woodpeckers whose plumage mirrors that of the *Chrysocolaptes* genus. *Dinopium* comprises four species: the Olive-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium rafflesii*, the Himalayan Flameback *D. shorii*, the Black-rumped Flameback *D. benghalense*, and the Common Flameback *D. javanense*. Thus in many areas of the Oriental Region where there is a *Chrysocolaptes* there is a "look-alike" *Dinopium* taxon. In general, species of *Dinopium* can be recognised by their entirely black hindneck, the bill being shorter than the head length, and the dark eyes as opposed to bright white in adult *Chrysocolaptes*. Caution is, however, necessary in the field as depending on light, distance from the observer, and optical aids used, the apparent colour and tone of the bird's mantle can change from red to olive or gold. This should always be borne in mind when identifying these woodpeckers.

Why do the flameback genera show parallel variation?

What puzzles scientists is why these two groups of woodpeckers show parallel variation in plumage colour. One possible explanation is that interspecific competition[1] through mutual aggression is driving the convergent plumage patterns. If this is the reason, then convergent plumage should evolve only where there is geographical overlap in distribution between two members of the genera. This is indeed the case, with *Dinopium* woodpeckers possessing crimson rumps only where they occur together with the always crimson-rumped Greater Flamebacks. A good example is Black-rumped Flamebacks, which have black rumps in north-west India and Pakistan; but more southern subspecies, overlapping in distribution with Greater Flamebacks, have a crimson back and crimson tips to the rump. The only golden-winged Philippine subspecies of the Greater Flameback is *erythrocephalus*, which also has an all-red head; it occurs together with the

Common Flameback (race *everetti*) on Palawan, Balabac and the Calamians, and which shows similarly a red rump, yellowish-olive wings and an expansion of red on the head. The other Greater Flamebacks of the Philippines have red wings, including the spectacular golden subspecies *xanthocephalus* on Negros.

Recently, a different hypothesis has attempted to explain another case of convergence between sympatric birds involving taxonomically much more widely separated groups[3]. Pairs of species with similar plumages often comprise a very aggressive and 'fierce' species and a rather 'timid' one. An example is from Wallacea, where orioles *Oriolus* mimic aggressive friarbirds of the genus *Philemon*. The mimicry of the 'inferior' species protects it because the dominant species avoids engaging in aggressive interaction with like-plumaged competitors.

If the convergent patterns are due to interspecific aggression, we would expect the sympatric flamebacks to be mutually aggressive, but if one is mimicking the other then we would predict that one of them should be subordinate to the other. Unfortunately, insufficient information exists with respect to actual interspecific aggression and competition to know what is the driving force behind the convergent plumage patterns that we see within the flamebacks.

We hope that we have shown that woodpeckers are fascinating for many reasons. There are great gaps in our knowledge concerning all aspects of their biology and taxonomy. Such information would not only help us to understand how ecologically similar species can coexist, but would also further our understanding of the many intriguing problems associated with woodpecker colouration.

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Woodpecker Plate

Illustration by Dave Nurney from Woodpeckers by Hans Winkler, David C. Christie and Dave Nurney to be published later this year by Pica Press. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist and with a contribution by Pica Press towards the colour reproduction.

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Key to Plate

1. WHITE-NAPED WOODPECKER
Chrysocolaptes festivus

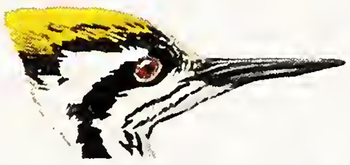
Black back and golden wings; unmistakable by virtue of the large white triangle on its mantle. Juveniles are generally duller, with yellow crown and with some orange-red on nape (female), crest and crown sides (male).

1a Male: red crown
1b Female: yellow crown

2. GREATER FLAMEBACK
Chrysocolaptes lucidus

Extreme geographical variation. All subspecies have crimson lower back and rump. Hindneck and upper mantle white or whitish in most forms, never totally black as in *Dinopium* species. Bill as long as head; eyes pale or bright in some subspecies. Wings and mantle golden-olive or dark red; moustache double-striped. Females have rounded spots in crown. Juveniles are generally duller, with dark eyes, and with obscure spots and bars on back.

2a Male **(India)**: red crown
2b Female **(India)**: crown black with whitish spots
2c Male **(east Java)**: buff-tinged face; red crown
2d Female **(east Java)**: crown golden-yellow
2e Male **(Negros, Philippines)**: sides of head, neck and underparts golden-yellow; red crown; pale bill
2f Female **(Negros)**: head, including crown, yellow
2g Male **(Palawan, Philippines)**: entire head red; neck and underparts black and white; pale bill and feet (Immature has less red on head, similar to female)
2h Female **(Palawan)**: head dark with light spotting on crown
2i Male **(Sri Lanka)**: dark; mantle and wings dark crimson, neck and underparts black and white, crown dark red
2j Female **(Sri Lanka)**: crown black with white spots
2k Male **(Mindanao, Philippines)**: head, neck and upper breast reddish; mantle dark crimson; red crown
2l Female **(Mindanao)**: crown black with dark spotting
2m Male **(Luzon, Philippines)**: face patterned black and white; mantle dark crimson; crown red
2n Female **(Luzon)**: black head spotted with white, particularly on crown
2o Male **(Samar, Philippines)**: head and neck reddish, with darker reddish moustache; crown red (dark and spotted on female)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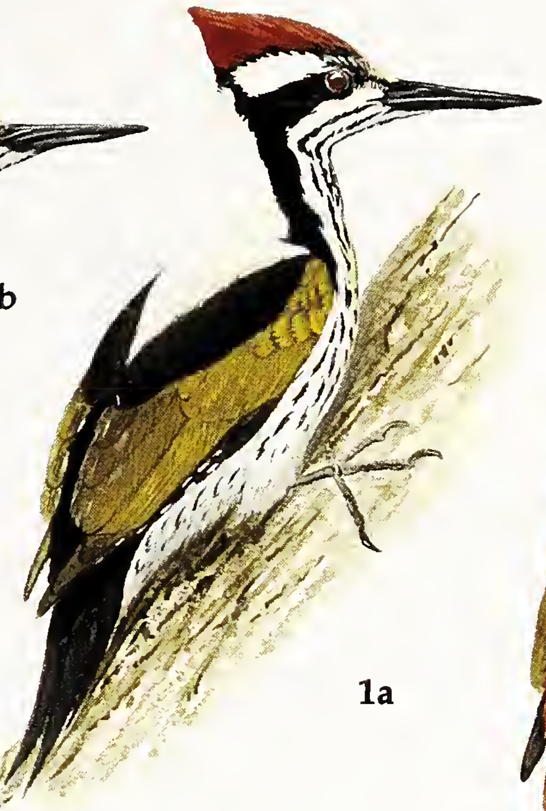
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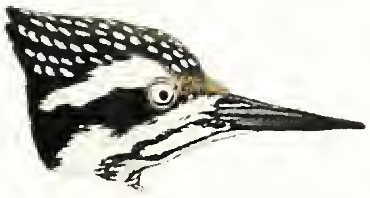
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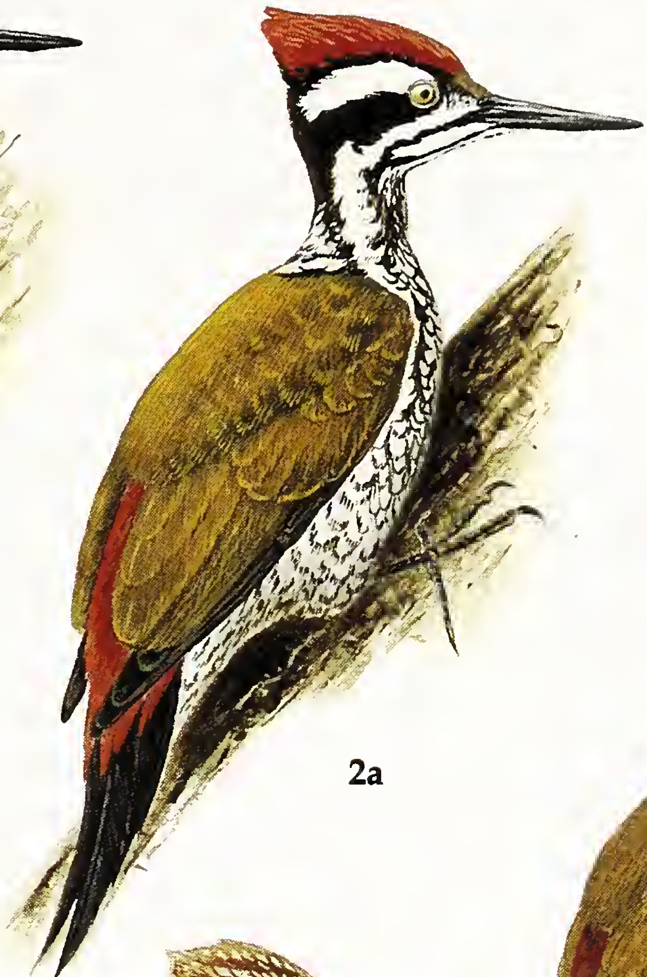
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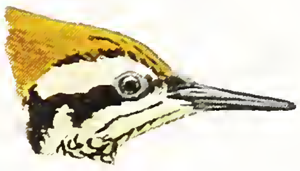
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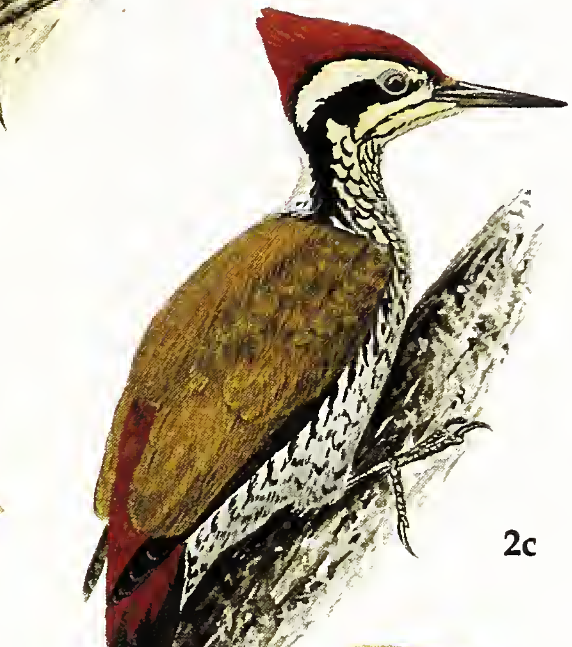
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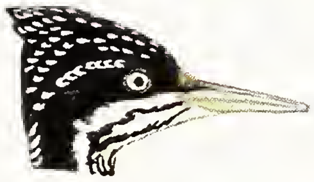
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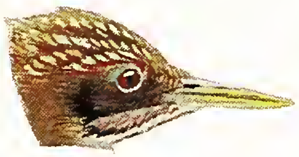
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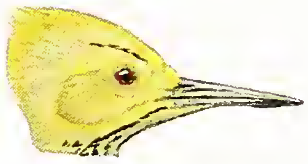
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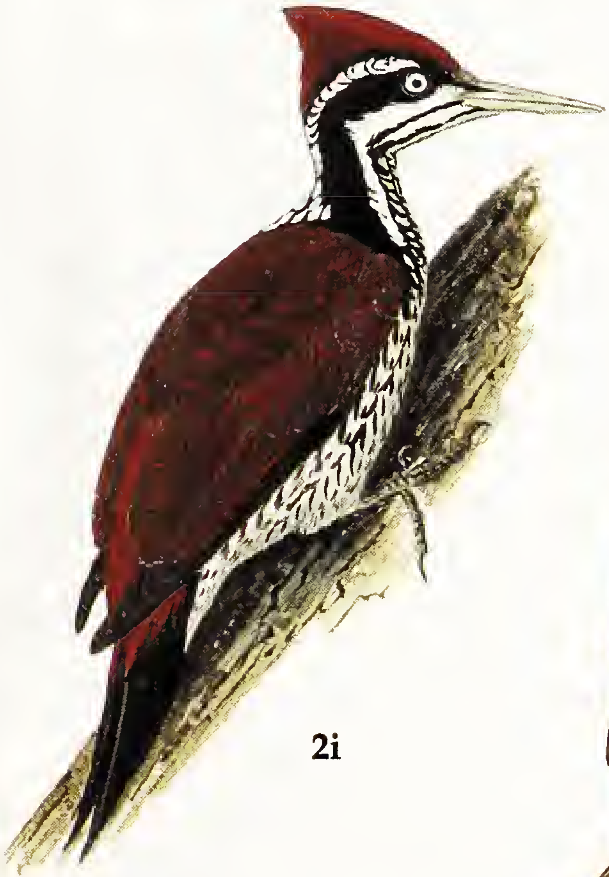
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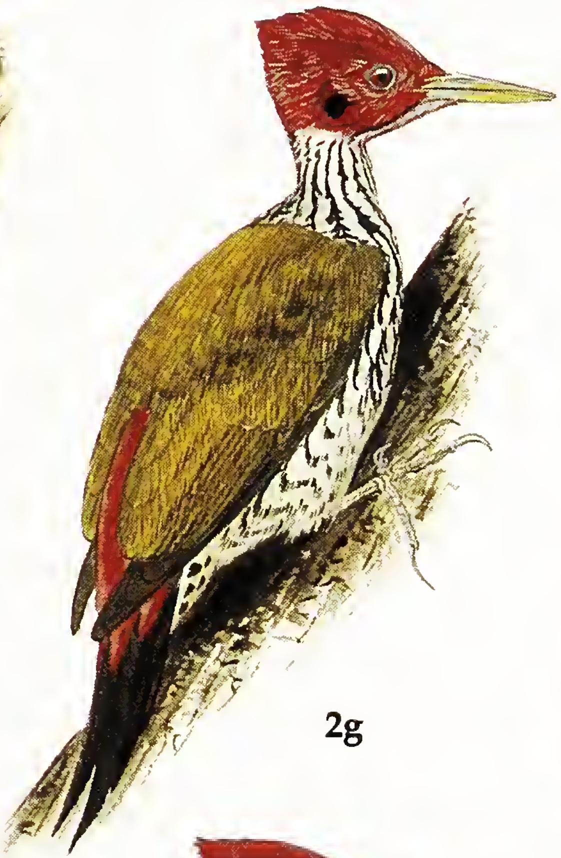
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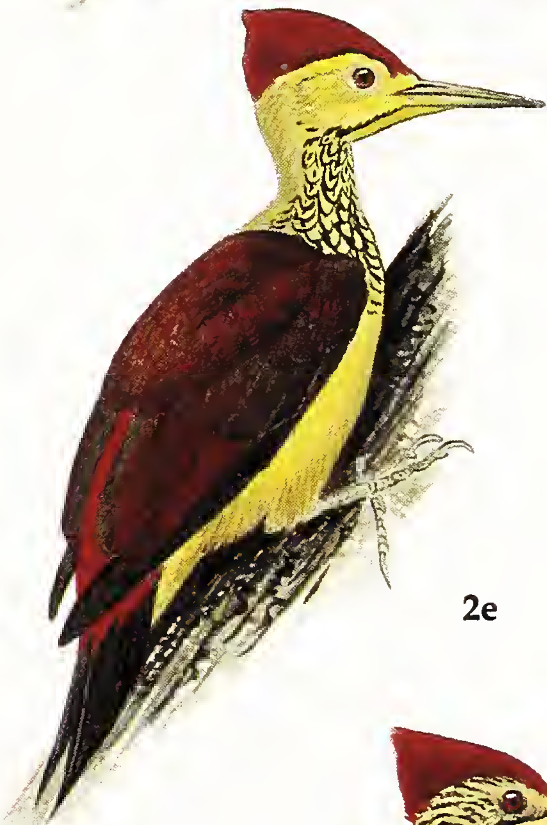
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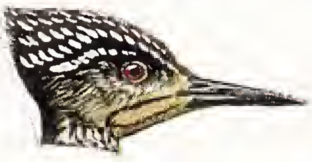
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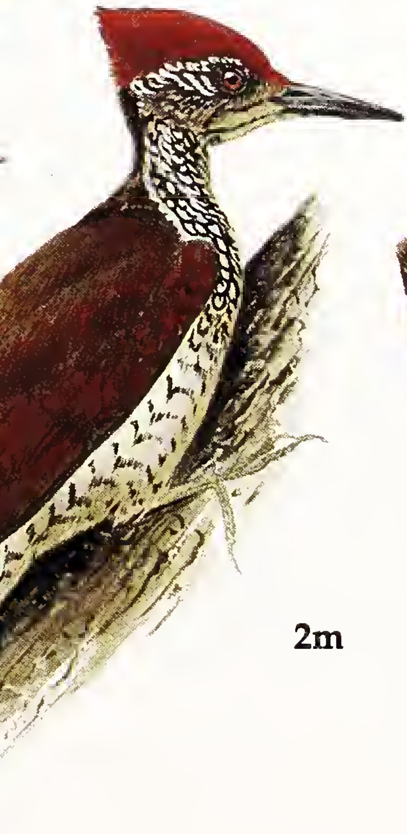
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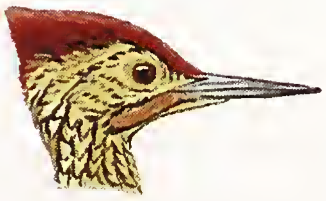
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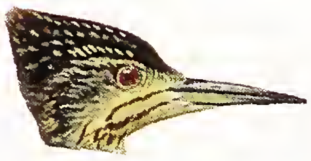
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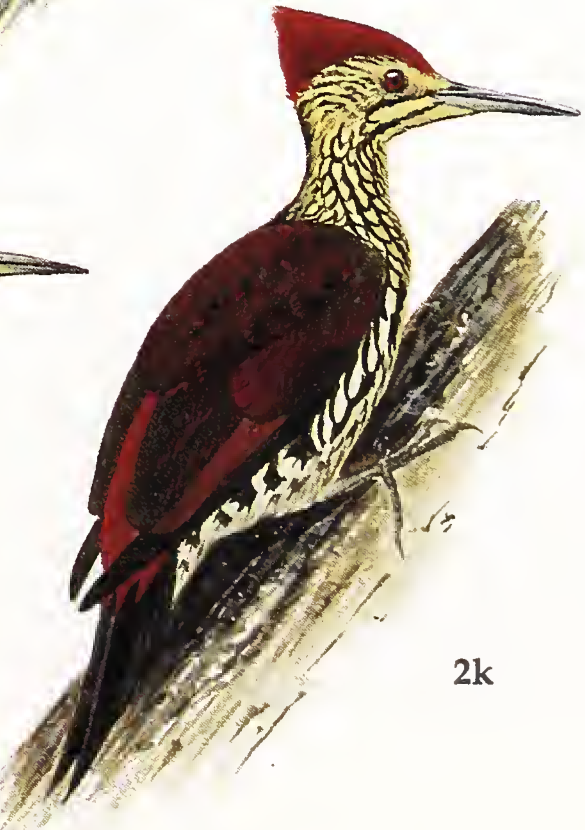
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ClubWatch

The Nature Society (Singapore)

Founded
1954

Area of concern
Singapore

Membership
1,500

Declared aims
To promote interest in the plant and animal life in Singapore and the neighbouring countries. To encourage more people to appreciate and care for the natural heritage.

Most people's image of the Singapore is of a concrete jungle where the pace of life is fast and economy thrives. However, looking at the publications of the Nature Society (Singapore) dispels this perception and shows that there is another side to this small island at the tip of the Malay Peninsula. There are still some great places to watch wildlife on the island which the Society is trying to conserve. Originally founded in 1954 as the Singapore branch of the Malayan Nature Society (MNS), now Malaysian Nature Society, it became a separate organisation in 1991 but still retains close ties with MNS. It is a non-governmental conservation organisation that concerns itself with all aspects of wildlife conservation within Singapore while keeping its membership informed about issues of regional and global concern.

The society produces publications, two of which are free to all members. These are the bimonthly *Nature News,* which keeps members in touch with the wide array of society activities ranging from slide shows in Singapore to overseas trips, and the quarterly *Nature Watch,* a full colour magazine that covers a broad spread of conservation issues from the snakes of Singapore, excellently illustrated with colour photographs, through the implications of the Earth Summit to bird's nest soup and swiftlet conservation. Other Society publications include *The Pangolin* and *Singapore Avifauna* which provide current information on the distribution of the animals and birds of the Singapore region. The Society has also produces educational materials such as the "Do-it-yourself Nature Walk" guides to local important sites.

In the area of conservation, the Society was successful in its proposal to turn the Sungei Buloh birdwatching site into a nature reserve. This predominantly wetland habitat comprising fish and prawn ponds was threatened with development for agriculture. The work of the society in surveying and lobbying has lead the Singapore government to develop the area at a cost of S$8.5 million into a nature park that preserves the wide diversity of habitats that includes mangrove areas, which are fast declining throughout the Oriental Region. This provides an excellent sanctuary for over 140 bird species including **Chinese Egret** *Egretta eulophotes* and **Asian Dowitcher** *Limnodromus semipalmatus* (see pages 51-53 of this issue). The success of this project has lead to the development of a further nine conservation proposals including a Master Plan for Nature Conservation in Singapore.

The society comprises eight separate groups including bird, conservation and education groups which organise separate activities. This rapidly growing society will continue to make an impact on conservation in the region and it is to be hoped that they can preserve the last 5% of Singapore's wilderness.

Ten years of commitment to conservation

Oriental Bird Club
10th Anniversary

One of the most important activities and functions of the Oriental Bird Club is its awards for conservation work. These grants are made possible only by the generosity of our members and Corporate Supporters. The Club's annual Mega Grand Prize Draw is a major source of funding and we would like once again to thank warmly all those who have bought tickets or donated prizes. We are also very grateful to our Corporate Supporters, many of whom have fully funded projects and have enabled OBC to significantly increase the number of small grants awarded since 1992. Important contributions to the OBC Conservation Fund are also made by profits from Club sales and raffles, and generous donations made by the Bird and Wildlife Bookshop and Wildwings from a percentage of the profits made from OBC members who use their services. In this article Carol Inskipp, who has been at the heart of the Club's conservation activities, looks back on the first decade's achievements.

The conservation of birds in the Oriental Region has been one of OBC's main goals from its very beginning. However, in the Club's early years the membership was small, with fewer than 500 members, so we lacked the resources to implement a programme of direct involvement in the region's conservation. The Club still endeavoured to publicise environmental issues in the bulletin and made an important contribution by helping to finance publications such as *Resident forest birds in Thailand* by Phil Round.

The main conservation efforts began in 1986 when a fund was set up enabling the OBC to make its first awards of £250 to assist work on **Gurney's Pitta** *Pitta gurneyi* in Thailand and £500 (US$750) to Frank Rozendaal to study pittas in Vietnam. The support of Leica Camera in 1988 was secured and this has established the Club's firm commitment to working in the Orient through the annual *Forktail*-Leica *Award*. As we look back over the decade, we have now supported over 50 projects amounting to over £21,000 (US$ 31,500) of funding. The enormous growth in funding from our modest beginnings can be seen from last year's efforts, when £7,200 (US$ 10,800) was awarded to 16 projects.

Small grants scheme

Primarily, OBC supports conservation in the Orient by offering small grants worth up to £500. The Club encourages especially those projects which collect information that will be useful to wildlife authorities in the Orient, and to national and international non-governmental organisations. Equally important are those projects encouraging conservation awareness in the region.

Since 1990, the great majority of awards have been donated directly to Oriental nationals, which is undoubtedly the most effective way forward for conservation in the region. A small number of grants have been given to fund Oriental counterparts working with people from outside the region, who thus gain valuable training in the field. This can lead to further independent studies, as exemplified by Deddy Juhaeni who won the *Forktail*-Leica*Award* in 1992 after initially being awarded an OBC survey grant as one of the Indonesian counterparts of the 1992 Manchester Metropolitan University Expedition to Sumba. The second award has enabled Deddy to continue his study of the Sumba Hornbill.

Globally threatened species

An important focus for many OBC-sponsored projects, often generating important new information, are those studying globally threatened species. An example is Professor Wu Zhikang's study of **Reeves's Pheasant** *Syrmaticus reevesii* in Tuoda forest in China, a project jointly funded with the World Pheasant Association (see page 26). Another valuable study was a survey led by Asad Rahmani of the **White-browed Bushchat** *Saxicola macrorhyncha* (see *OBC Bull.* 17). Asad's team found 75 individuals in 10-12 locations in the Thar desert in India earlier this year, representing a much greater number than had been recorded previously. Other threatened species studies include the **Sula Scrubfowl** *Megapodius bernsteinii* in Indonesia, led by Mochammad Indrawan; the endemic birds of Cebu by the Philippine Wetland and Wildlife Conservation Foundation; the **White-winged Duck** *Cairina scutulata* in Tinsukia District in north-east India by Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury; the **Lesser Florican** *Eupodotis indica* in India by Dr Ravi Sankaran; the **Black-necked Crane** *Grus nigricollis* in Bhutan

Oriental Bird Club
10th Anniversary

Ten years of commitment to conservation

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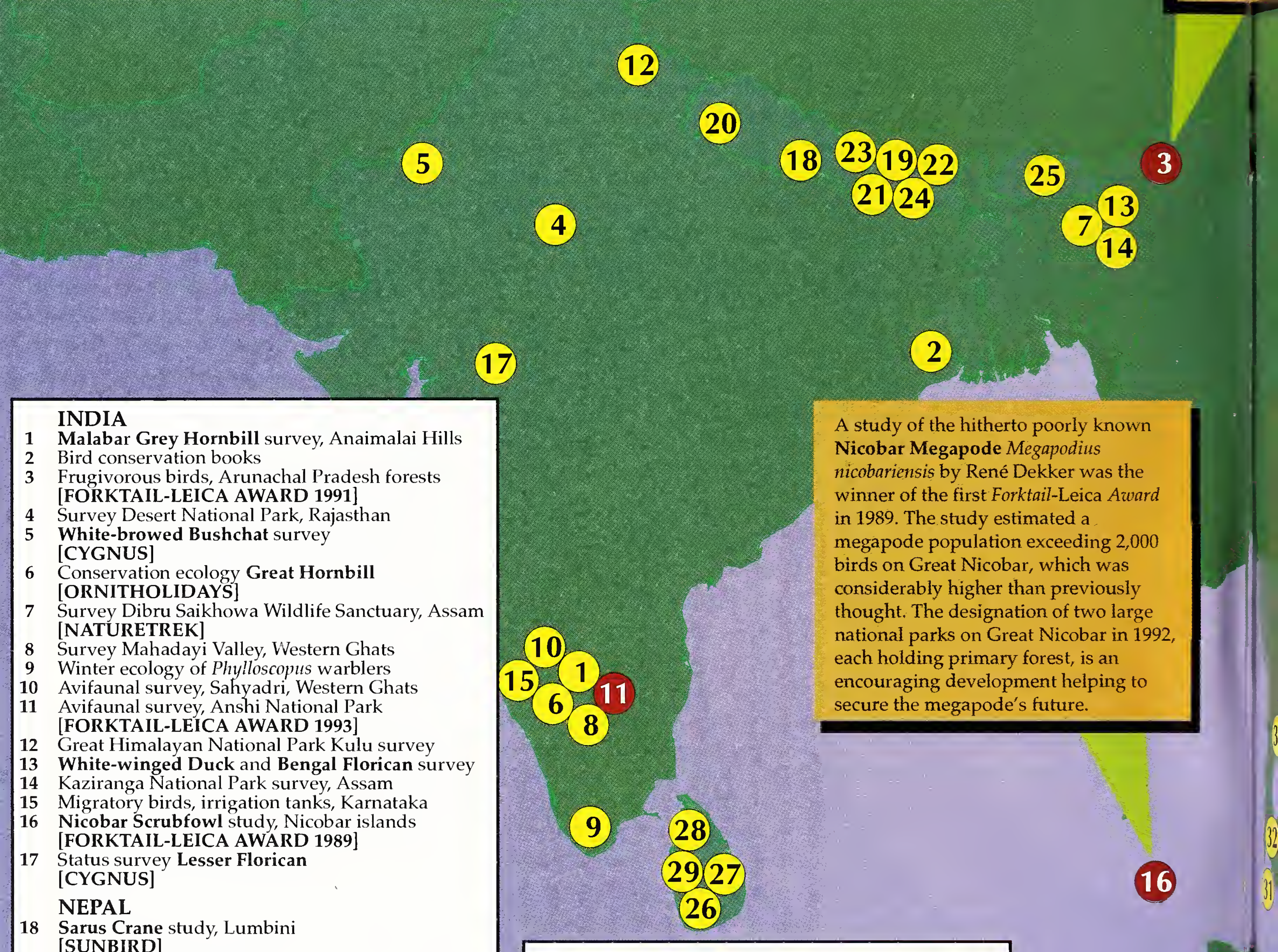


A study of the hitherto poorly known **Nicobar Megapode** *Megapodius nicobariensis* by René Dekker was the winner of the first *Forktail*-Leica *Award* in 1989. The study estimated a megapode population exceeding 2,000 birds on Great Nicobar, which was considerably higher than previously thought. The designation of two large national parks on Great Nicobar in 1992, each holding primary forest, is an encouraging development helping to secure the megapode's future.

INDIA
1 **Malabar Grey Hornbill** survey, Anaimalai Hills
2 Bird conservation books
3 Frugivorous birds, Arunachal Pradesh forests **[FORKTAIL-LEICA AWARD 1991]**
4 Survey Desert National Park, Rajasthan
5 **White-browed Bushchat** survey **[CYGNUS]**
6 Conservation ecology **Great Hornbill** **[ORNITHOLIDAYS]**
7 Survey Dibru Saikhowa Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam **[NATURETREK]**
8 Survey Mahadayi Valley, Western Ghats
9 Winter ecology of *Phylloscopus* warblers
10 Avifaunal survey, Sahyadri, Western Ghats
11 Avifaunal survey, Anshi National Park **[FORKTAIL-LEICA AWARD 1993]**
12 Great Himalayan National Park Kulu survey
13 **White-winged Duck** and **Bengal Florican** survey
14 Kaziranga National Park survey, Assam
15 Migratory birds, irrigation tanks, Karnataka
16 **Nicobar Scrubfowl** study, Nicobar islands **[FORKTAIL-LEICA AWARD 1989]**
17 Status survey **Lesser Florican** **[CYGNUS]**

NEPAL
18 **Sarus Crane** study, Lumbini **[SUNBIRD]**
19 Bird field study centre **[MURPHY'S WILDLIFE]**
20 **Bengal Florican** survey
21 Chitlang bird and forest survey
22 Provision of educational fieldwork equipment
23 River birds ecology, Likhu Khola
24 Provision of educational fieldwork equipment

BHUTAN
25 Wintering **Black-necked Crane** survey

SRI LANKA
26 Maduganga estuary survey
27 Avifaunal survey, Hantana University
28 Annaivilundawa tanks survey
29 Negombo Lagoon survey

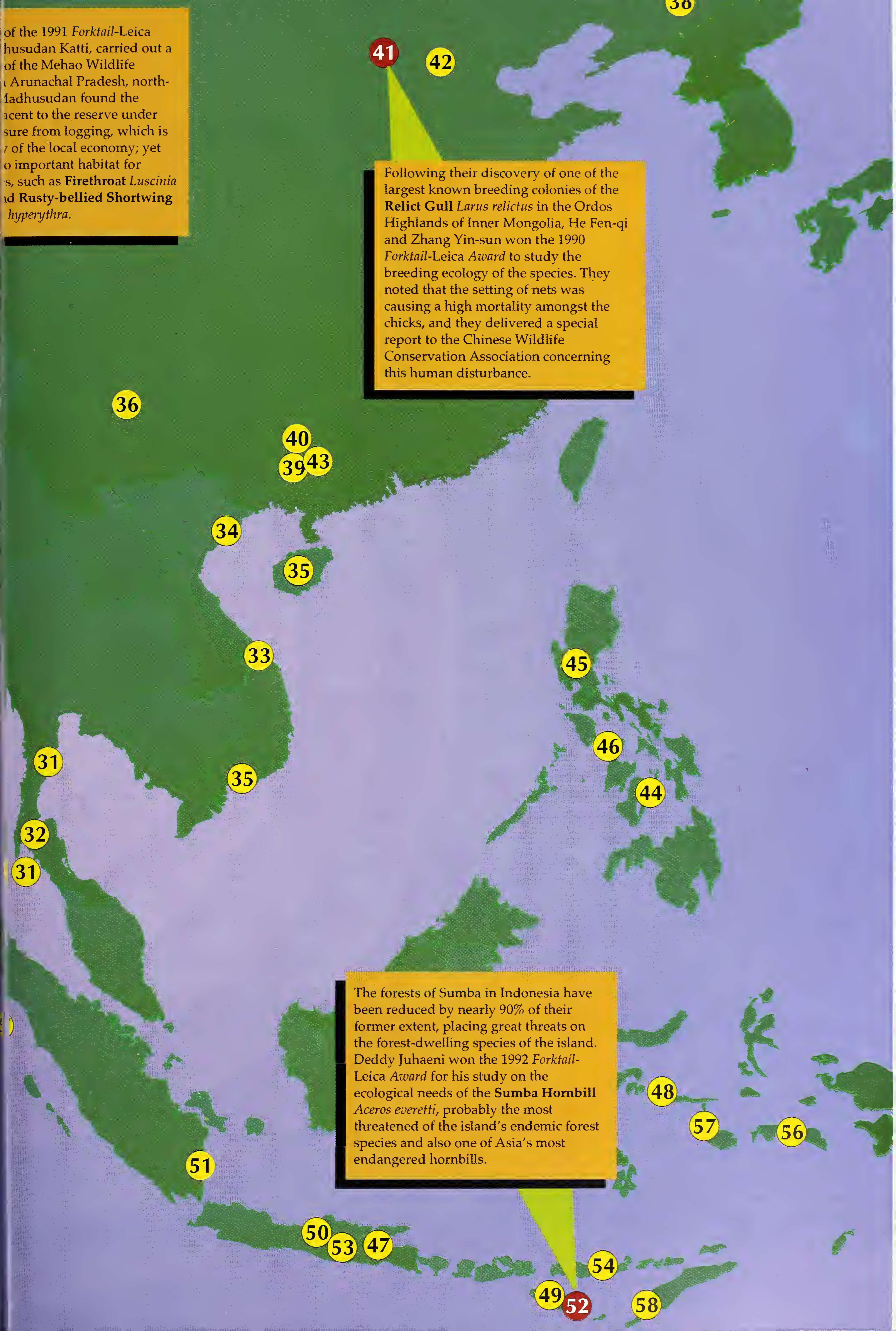
THAILAND
30 **Gurney's Pitta**
31 Tarutao National Park survey
32 Khao Sam Roi Yot biodiversity study

VIETNAM
33 Pitta surveys
34 Red River Delta project
35 Surveys of threatened bird species

CHINA
36 **Reeves's Pheasant** survey, Tuoda forest
37 **Hainan Leaf-Warbler** survey, Hainan
38 **Scaly-sided Merganser** survey, Xiao Xingangling
39 **White-eared Night-Heron**, Guangxi **[BIRDQUEST]**
40 Li valley survey, Guangxi
41 **Relict Gull** breeding ecology, Ordos **[FORKTAIL-LEICA AWARD 1990]**
42 Wuliangsu Hai wetland, Inner Mongolia
43 **White-eared Night-Heron**, Longhu Mountain

PHILIPPINES
44 Survey endemic birds on Cebu
45 Bird trade survey, Dalton Pass, Luzon
46 Mindoro and Negros survey

INDONESIA
47 **Green Peafowl** study, east Java
48 Taliabu bird survey
49 Sumba forests survey
50 East Javan forests survey
51 **Storm's Stork** study
52 Ecology of **Sumba Hornbill** **[FORKTAIL-LEICA AWARD 1992]**
53 **Green Peafowl** study, Java **[WILDWINGS]**
54 Survey Flores and Sumbawa
55 Survey Nias and Simeulue
56 Survey of **Salmon-crested Cockatoo**
57 **Sula Scrubfowl** survey
58 Status of lowland forests, west Timor



of the 1991 *Forktail*-Leica
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Arunachal Pradesh, north-
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of the local economy; yet
o important habitat for
s, such as **Firethroat** *Luscinia*
d **Rusty-bellied Shortwing**
hyperythra.

Following their discovery of one of the largest known breeding colonies of the **Relict Gull** *Larus relictus* in the Ordos Highlands of Inner Mongolia, He Fen-qi and Zhang Yin-sun won the 1990 *Forktail*-Leica *Award* to study the breeding ecology of the species. They noted that the setting of nets was causing a high mortality amongst the chicks, and they delivered a special report to the Chinese Wildlife Conservation Association concerning this human disturbance.

The forests of Sumba in Indonesia have been reduced by nearly 90% of their former extent, placing great threats on the forest-dwelling species of the island. Deddy Juhaeni won the 1992 *Forktail*-Leica *Award* for his study on the ecological needs of the **Sumba Hornbill** *Aceros everetti*, probably the most threatened of the island's endemic forest species and also one of Asia's most endangered hornbills.

by Col. Tommy Chacko; the **Scaly-sided Merganser** *Merganser squamatus* by Professor Zhao Zhengie and the **White-eared Night-Heron** *Gorasachius magnificus* in China by Professor Zhou Fang.

Surveying poorly known areas

There are many areas in the Orient which are poorly known ornithologically or, indeed, which have never been visited by ornithologists. Funding surveys of these areas provides valuable information and may lead to a variety of results, from securing protection for a threatened area, to identifying new range extensions for species.

Surveying protected areas which have not been visited at certain times of the year, or do not have a current species lists, is a practical focus for baseline fieldwork. The Club has funded surveys of Desert National Park in north-west India by Harkirat Sangha, Dibru Saikhowa Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam, India by Dr Anwarruddin Choudhury, Kaziranga National Park in Assam by Dr P. C. Bhattarcharjee and Tarutao National Park in Thailand by the Bangkok Bird Club. Also of great significance are surveys of poorly known areas which are likely to support globally threatened species or concentrations of endemics. These include Prakash Gole's survey of the Sahyadri in the Western Ghats and Liu Xiaohua's survey of the Li valley in Guangxi in China.

Surveying threatened areas

Surveys of areas which are both under-recorded and currently threatened are especially useful as they can provide valuable information supporting their conservation. For instance, Dr J. C. Uttangi surveyed the forest reserves of the Mahadayi valley in the Western Ghats in India, which are threatened by a hydroelectric dam project. If this goes ahead it will affect the entire valley and engulf over 1,600 ha of semi-evergreen forest. An area, including all the forest reserves, has been identified as suitable for designation as a wildlife sanctuary.

Promoting fellow non-governmental organisations

OBC's conservation fund has, where possible, supported work carried out by NGOs, such as the Bangkok Bird Club survey of Tarutao National Park and the Nepal Bird Watching Club study of Chitlang forest in central Nepal. This helps to foster collaboration and promote the work of the national organisation, which can be especially important in young or newly-formed NGOs.

Increasing emphasis on conservation awareness

Several OBC-sponsored projects have included the promotion of conservation awareness as one of their objectives. Fieldwork equipment has been donated to the Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA), a Nepalese NGO, for use by children and teachers in 1991 and 1993, and in 1994 funding from Murphy's Wildlife enabled us to support them further (see *OBC Bull.* 18 pp. 12-13 and *Conservation Fund* this issue). Other projects including an environmental awareness component include the studies of **Sula Scrubfowl** and **Green Peafowl** *Pavo muticus*, both carried out by Mochammad Indrawan in Indonesia, and Prakash Gole's survey of the Sahyadri in India.

In future, OBC would like to fund more conservation awareness projects. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of In Focus, we were therefore delighted to announce a new initiative, the *OBC - In Focus Conservation Awareness Award* in November 1993 (see *OBC Bull.* 18). A total of £1,000 (US $1,500) is being offered to Oriental nationals for a project in which the main emphasis is on this issue.

Putting your money to work

Apart from a residual £200 - £300 (c. US$500), all of OBC's Conservation Fund is spent by the end of every year. The fund's success in the future therefore depends entirely on the continuing support of our members and Corporate Sponsors. It is therefore gratifying to note that whilst Corporate Sponsors need only make a one-off donation, many have expressed an interest in continuing to make further donations. The support of Cygnus Wildlife and Wildwings is especially commendable, as they are this year supporting their second project.

Looking to the future

Oriental birds face ever increasing threats with as many as 300 species now at risk. In winter 1993-1994, for the first time, the western population of the Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus* failed to return to its wintering quarters at Keoladeo Ghana in Rajasthan, India. It may be too late for this population of Siberian Crane, but conservation efforts can and do succeed. Recently, Thailand's most important wetland, Khao Sam Roi Yot was threatened with complete drainage, but liaison with local people and increasing conservation awareness may now result in saving the marsh. OBC's efforts, through the support of its members and Corporate Sponsors, is needed more than ever before.

Carol Inskipp 1 Herneside, March Road, Welney, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 9SB, U. K.

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Address ....

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*please tick as appropriate

with the sum of £....................

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Expiry date				

Cardholder's name ....

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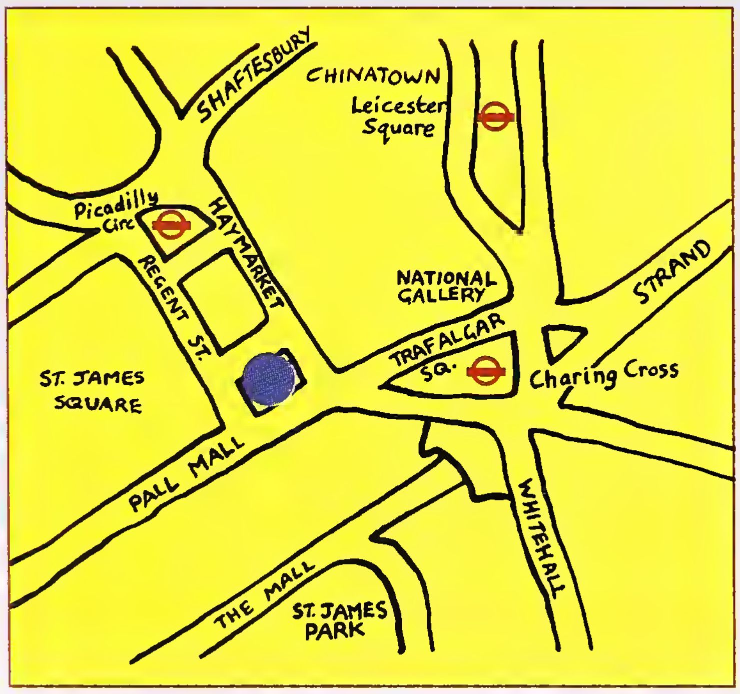

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A review of the taxonomic status of the Yellow-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax galbanus*

When a subspecies of the Yellow-throated Laughingthrush that has not been seen in the field for more than 30 years starts appearing in European bird collections it is time to start investigating the situation. This review has compiled much information and interesting questions, especially regarding taxonomic status, but suggests that without more field data the situation cannot be resolved unequivocally.

Introduction

Many avian taxonomic issues in the Oriental Region remain to be resolved. Work on the Oriental Bird Club Checklist (see page 5) has identified over 100 cases where a combination of fieldwork and museum and literature research is required to determine whether taxa currently considered as subspecies may be better treated as full species, or vice versa.

An example is discussed here, the subspecies of the Yellow-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax galbanus*. One of these was originally described as a separate species, but in the 1930s was reinterpreted as a subspecies of *G. galbanus*, at a time when "lumping" geographically representative forms had become the norm (see Haffer[14]). Whether this is the correct treatment in this case, or whether they are sufficiently distinct for two species to be recognised is the subject of this article.

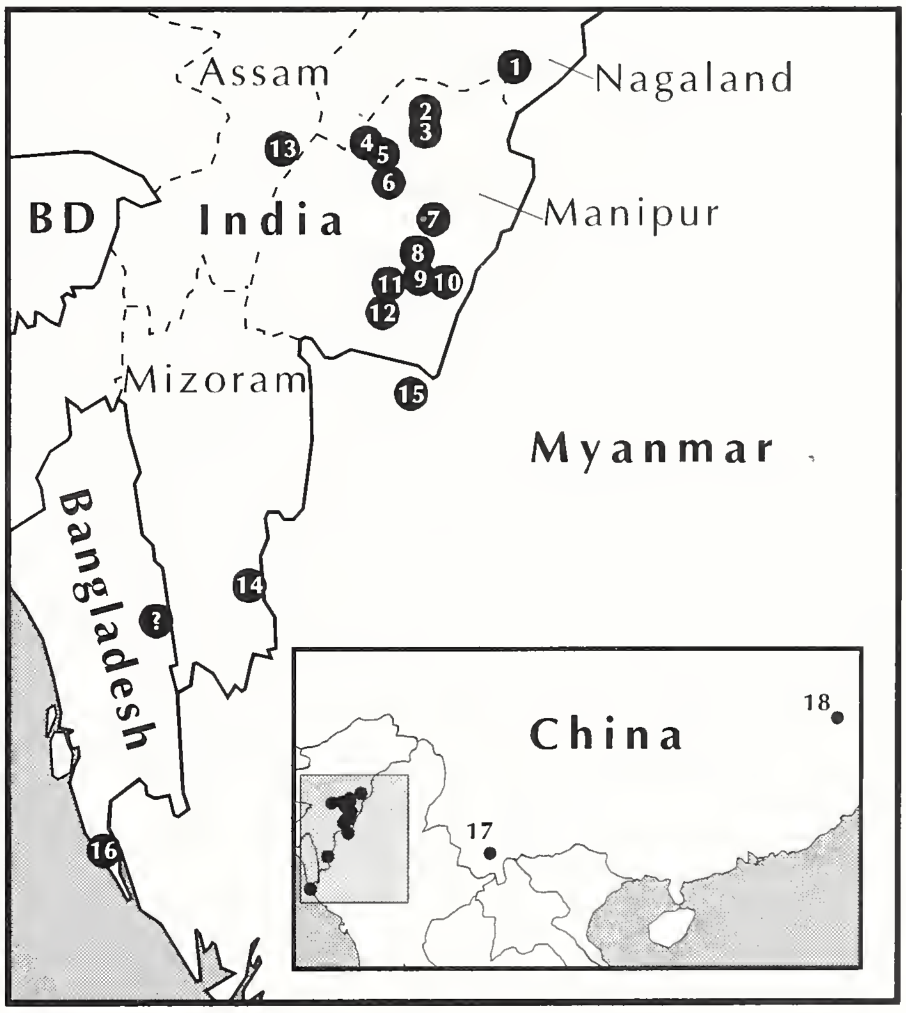
The information required to carry out this study has been compiled from a wide range of sources, the historical and recent literature, in both western and regional publications; specimens in museums in Europe, the United States, India and China; captive birds which have recently been obtained by several European zoos; and contacts with some of the few ornithologists who have observed these birds in the wild. The difficulties in collating information from such diverse sources are a major obstacle to the investigation and resolution of this type of problem.

The subspecies of *G. galbanus*, and their distribution

The nominate subspecies is known from the mountains to the south of the Brahmaputra River in north-east India and adjacent north-west Myanmar (= Burma) and eastern Bangladesh. The localities where it has been recorded are described below, and shown in Figure 1.

INDIA

Manipur: The type series was collected by Godwin-Austen[12,13] in the Manipur valley below the Koupru range (= Kopum range[17]) in February 1873 (series in the British Museum of Natural History [BMNH][26,29]), and he also observed the species at the head-waters of the Barak and other streams that flow into the Manipur valley from the north-east; he found it locally abundant, and saw flocks of fifty to eighty or more. Additional specimens collected by Godwin-Austen at Sunting (= Santing or Takao) in 1895 and 1896 are in the BMNH.



1	Meluri
2	Barak River
3	Karing
4	Santing Hills
5	Litang
6	Koupru Range
7	Moirang Prem
8	Hierok
9	Phalel
10	Aimol
11	Kokshim Koolel
12	Soognoo
13	North Cachar
14	Blue Mountain, Lushai Hills
15	Hiangzang
16	Silkhali
17	Wuyuan
18	Ssu-mao

Figure 1: Map showing the known distribution of Yellow-throated Laughingthrush

Hume[17] also found the species common, or even abundant, in several places on the lower slopes of the hills of eastern Manipur, specific localities being the low hills east of Soognoo, low hills east of Kokshin Koolel, Phalel, Hierok, Moirang Prem and in the hills below Aimole (many specimens in the BMNH). A specimen in the Bombay Natural History Society collection was obtained in the Imphal area in March 1946[1], and one in the National Museum of Natural History, Washington (USNM) was collected at Karong by Ripley in November 1950. The only recent sightings of this subspecies of which we are aware come from the same general area, when Mark and Maire Beaman saw up to 10 birds on the 4 and 6 January 1991 near to Litan (or Litang), which is c.45 km north-north-east of Imphal.

Nagaland: This species is apparently only known from this state by the specimens collected in the Naga Hills by Ripley in 1950[24], along the Meluri trail at 3,000ft (915 m), only a few kilometres from the border with Manipur.

Assam: All of the records from this state are by Baker[3,5], who describes it as very rare in the Jiri and Jennam valleys, North Cachar.

Mizoram: The species is known from the Lushai Hills in south-east Mizoram on the border with Myanmar, specific localities mentioned being Blue Mountains (specimens in University of Michigan Museum of Zoology [UMMZ]: R. Storer *in litt.* 1994) and Hmuntha (specimen in USNM: P. Rasmussen *in litt.* 1994). This area appears to be disjunct from the main range of the nominate form, and the specimens collected there were originally described by Koelz[18] as a new subspecies, *G. g. galbanatus*. However, we here follow Deignan[10], who places it with the nominate form. Dr Robert Storer (*in litt.* 1994) kindly examined and compared the type series of *galbanatus* in the UMMZ with specimens of the nominate form, and could find no significant differences between them.

BANGLADESH

The status of *G. galbanus* in this country is unclear. It has been listed e.g. [15,25] for the Chittagong hills, but we have been unable to locate any specific records from there. On our behalf, Pamela Rasmussen (*in litt.* 1994) checked the files of material used in the preparation of the second edition of *A synopsis of the birds of India and Pakistan*[25], the most likely source of further information, but could not find any relevant records. Thus, while it is possible that the species occurs in these hills, this remains to be confirmed.

There is a recent sighting by S. M. A. Rashid of four bathing in a hill stream at Munchoni, near Teknaf, on 8 November 1983[28]. This locality, in the extreme south-east of Bangladesh, represents a range extension of at least 200 km from the Lushai hills, and is the only record of the species near to the coast.

MYANMAR (= BURMA)

The nominate subspecies was found to be locally common in the Chin Hills, in west-central Myanmar, by Hopwood and Mackenzie[16,27] whose survey area was encompassed within the Upper Chindwin forest division at around 23°45′N 94°00′E, "covering an area some 30 miles square".

CHINA

Jiangxi Province: As detailed in the accompanying article by Pasini *et al.*[23], *G. g. courtoisi* was originally described by Ménegaux[19,20] as a full species, but was later placed in *G. galbanus* by Berlioz[6], a treatment followed by virtually all subsequent authors. The type locality is Wuyuan (= Ouyuan), on the upper Luan Ho in the north-east of this province, where two specimens were collected in 1919. Berlioz[6], for unstated reasons, challenged the validity of the type locality. There have been no subsequent records, but He Fen-qi and Zhang Yi-sun were recently awarded a grant by the Zoologische Gesellschaft Fuer Arten und Populationsshutz (Muenchen) to search for it at the type locality. Although they did not see the species during an initial visit there in March 1994 they met people who knew it, albeit uncommonly, and found a specimen in a local house thus, proving beyond doubt the authenticity of the type locality (R. Wirth *in litt.* 1994).

Yunnan Province: Another subspecies, *G. g. simaoensis*, was described by Cheng and Tang[8], but Cheng[7] originally placed the specimens under *G. g. courtoisi*, presumably until he was able to examine material of *G. g. courtoisi* in Paris. The type locality is Simao, where three specimens were collected in March 1956. The holotype and one of the allotypes are deposited in the Department of Biology of Wuhan University, and the other allotype is in the Institute of Zoology, Academia Sinica, Beijing[8]. Several people have apparently searched for the species in Yunnan since its discovery in 1956, but without success[9].

Morphology

Description

All subspecies of *G. galbanus* are very striking, with a combination of a black face and chin and yellow throat. Below we give a detailed description of the nominate form and then compare and contrast this description to those of the two subspecies, which are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

The nominate form was illustrated in colour with the original type description[12] (Plate 1a), and has also been depicted in Ali and Ripley[2]. The species is a medium-sized laughingthrush about 24 cm (9.5 in) long. The following detailed description is taken from Hume[17]: "The **legs** and **feet** are a *pale silvery leaden*; the **bill** is *black, whitish horny* at the extreme tips; the **irides** *brownish yellow, orange,* or *orange red*; the **bare skin** below and behind the eye are *pale blue*, and this patch extends as far back as the tips of the *black* **ear-coverts**. This bare patch is almost the most conspicuous feature in the live bird, but Austen does not mention it. **Chin**, feathers at the base of lower mandible, **lores**, a very narrow frontal band, a narrow band above and a broad band below the eyes, and the **ear-coverts**, velvet black; **forehead**, **crown**, **occiput** and back and sides of **neck**, a *greyish olive green*, paler in some, duskier in others, often with a decidedly *greyer tinge* on the **nape**, and always with a more or less distinct *grey* shade on the **foremost frontal feathers** just above the black frontal band; entire **mantle** *brown*, sometimes with an *olivaceous*, sometimes with a faint *rusty tinge*, not infrequently with a faint *yellowish tinge* on the **lower rump** and **shorter upper tail-coverts**; **longest upper tail-coverts** and basal two-thirds of **central tail-feathers** *grey*, sometimes a *pure French grey*, sometimes with a *brownish*, sometimes with a faint *olivaceous tinge*; rest of **central tail-feathers** *deep brown*, often obsoletely barred paler and narrowly tipped with *brownish grey* or *brownish white* or *pale brown*; next pair similar, but the *deep brown* portions longer, and more decidedly paler tipped, and with the *grey* on the **inner webs** less pronounced; the **outer four pairs** *grey* towards their bases (this *grey* varying in shade as above and being often more or less obsolete on the **inner webs**), then *dark brown* (except in the **outermost feathers** where this is paler), and then broadly tipped with *pure white*, for say a full inch on the outermost pair and half an inch on the feathers next, but one, to the centre ones; quills [= **flight feathers**] *hair brown*, the visible portions of the **primaries** shaded with a more or less *pure hoary grey*, and those of the **secondaries** and **tertiaries** with a more or less *greyish olivaceous* shade of the colour of the **mantle**; **throat**, **cheeks**, **breast** and **abdomen** a beautiful *maize yellow*, a little more intense on the two first, more or less (scarcely at all in some) faintly shaded with *greyish olivaceous* on the third and almost always very pure on the last; sides of **breast**, **body** and **flanks** *greyish olive*, darker and *greener*, paler and *greyer* in different specimens; **lower tail-coverts** *pure white*; **tibial plumes** *pale pure yellow* to *yellowish white*, occasionally brushed here or there with the *greyish olive* of the flanks; edge of the **wing** at **carpal joint** and **wing-lining pale** *yellow* to *yellowish white*, often a little sullied."

Godwin-Austen[12] noted that the white tail-feathers and under tail-coverts of the same colour are very conspicuous when the bird is flying.

G. g. courtoisi

When Ménegaux[19,20] described *G. g. courtoisi* he summarised the principal differences from *G. galbanus* as being: a) heavier beak; b) dark azure blue head; c) bright yellow throat; d) borders of remiges blue-grey; e) the tail seen from above almost black, and e) larger in size. There is a plate of the specimen accompanying the description (Plate 1b), and subsequently a plate in Etchécopar and Hüe[11], and a description in Meyer de Schauensee[21] and Cheng[9]. Ménegaux's description of the crown is matched by

	G. g. galbanus[17]	*G. g. simaoensis**	*G. g. courtoisi*[19,20]
crown	greyish olive green, shaded grey at the front	deep bluish, no supercilium[8]	a broad bluish white band grading back into azure blue
nape	olive green, often tinged grey	deep bluish[8]	bright azure blue
back	brown, sometimes with an olivaceous or faint rusty tinge	darker brown or more rufous than *G. g. galbanus*	ochraceous reddish-brown or brownish
wings	brown, primaries shaded hoary grey	brown, with contrasting blue-grey primaries	brown, with contrasting blue-grey primaries
central tail-feathers	basal two-thirds grey, distal third deep brown, narrowly tipped paler	ashy-brown, with a broad terminal band of dark chestnut, tipped paler[8]	dark grey, their distal halves black with pale tips
outer tail-feathers	dark brown, with grey bases and broadly tipped pure white	—	black, with grey bases and tipped white
throat	maize yellow	lemon yellow	lemon yellow
breast and belly	maize yellow, no distinct breastband	yellow, with a yellowish-grey breastband[8]*	brownish yellow**

Table 1. Plumage characters of the Yellow-throated Laughingthrush based mainly on the type descriptions.
* For *G. g. simaoensis* description taken from Cheng and Tang[8] or captive birds;
** see text for more details on the underpart colouration.

	G. g. galbanus[17]		*G. g. simaoensis*[8]		*G. g. courtoisi*[19,20]
	male (5)	female (2)	male (1)	female (2)	unsexed (2)
length	229 - 246	241	243	238 - 246	240
tail	95 - 107	105 - 107	107	100 - 103	103
wing	91 - 97	94 - 97	103	96 - 101	104 - 107
tarsus	33 - 35	33 - 34	36.5	35 - 36	32 - 34
bill from gape	25 - 29	24 - 26	23.5	22 - 24	22
egg	25.8 x 18.6 (80)[5]		28.0 x 20.16 (6)[23]		—

Table 2. Measurements of the subspecies ofYellow-throated Laughingthrush

the paintings and subsequent description (and is like the captive birds in Plates 6-10), which he described (in translation): "crown is dark azure blue and separated from the black forehead by a large band of a bluish white at the base which becomes darker blue gradually on the cap. The [blue] colour of the head continues to the neck and sides behind the cheeks". There does, however, seem to be some confusion over the underpart colouration.

Ménegaux's type description details the throat as being a bright orange-yellow, and the breast and belly as being brownish yellow. The painting accompanying his article indeed depicts the bright pure yellow throat contrasting with the duller underparts but the latter appear more yellow-grey than brownish grey and slightly greyer on the breast than the belly.

Etchécopar and Hüe[11] depict the breast and belly as yellow with little or no contrast between the throat and the rest of the underparts (almost certainly an error). Dr Jouanin, in Pasini *et al.*[23], compared Ménegaux's plate with the type specimen and thinks that although the plate colouration is poor in certain parts it renders the colour well for the underparts, which he describes as grey from the upper breast to the vent. Jouanin stresses the constant greyish underparts because he states that the photographs (Plates x and y) are distinguished from the type specimens of *G. g. courtoisi* by the grey breast band that separates the yellow throat from the yellow belly.

G. g. simaoensis

According to Cheng and Tang[8] this subspecies differs from the nominate form in being larger in body size and in having the crown and nape deep bluish, no supercilium, chest with a yellowish-grey broad band, and the central tail feathers ashy-brown with a broad terminal band of dark chestnut, tipped paler. They also state that *G. g. simaoensis* is quite similar to *G. g. courtoisi* in body size and body colouration, but differs in having a broad yellowish-grey band across the chest, which is lacking in *G. g. courtoisi*. Another possible difference not noted by the authors is the tail pattern as a chestnut tail band is not mentioned in Ménegaux's type description of *G. g. courtoisi*.

Captive birds from Italy, Germany and U.K.

A number of birds have been turning up in consignments of birds exported to Germany, Italy and the U.K. from China (see Plates 2-9 and A and Pasini *et al.*[23]). They appear to belong to *G. g. simaoensis* because they show a broad grey breast band that separates the yellow throat from the yellow belly, and this is the opinion of Pasini *et al.*[23] who had photographs of the captive birds compared with the type specimens of all three taxa.

B. Heredia and R. Clay examined the specimen of *G. g. simaoensis* in the BMNH (originating from the captive population in Italy: Pasini *et al.*[23]) with the 43 specimens of nominate *G. galbanus* (Plates 2-4). They confirmed that none of the specimens of the nominate form approached the plumage colouration on the crown, throat and breast compared to the pattern of the Chinese specimen and photographs.

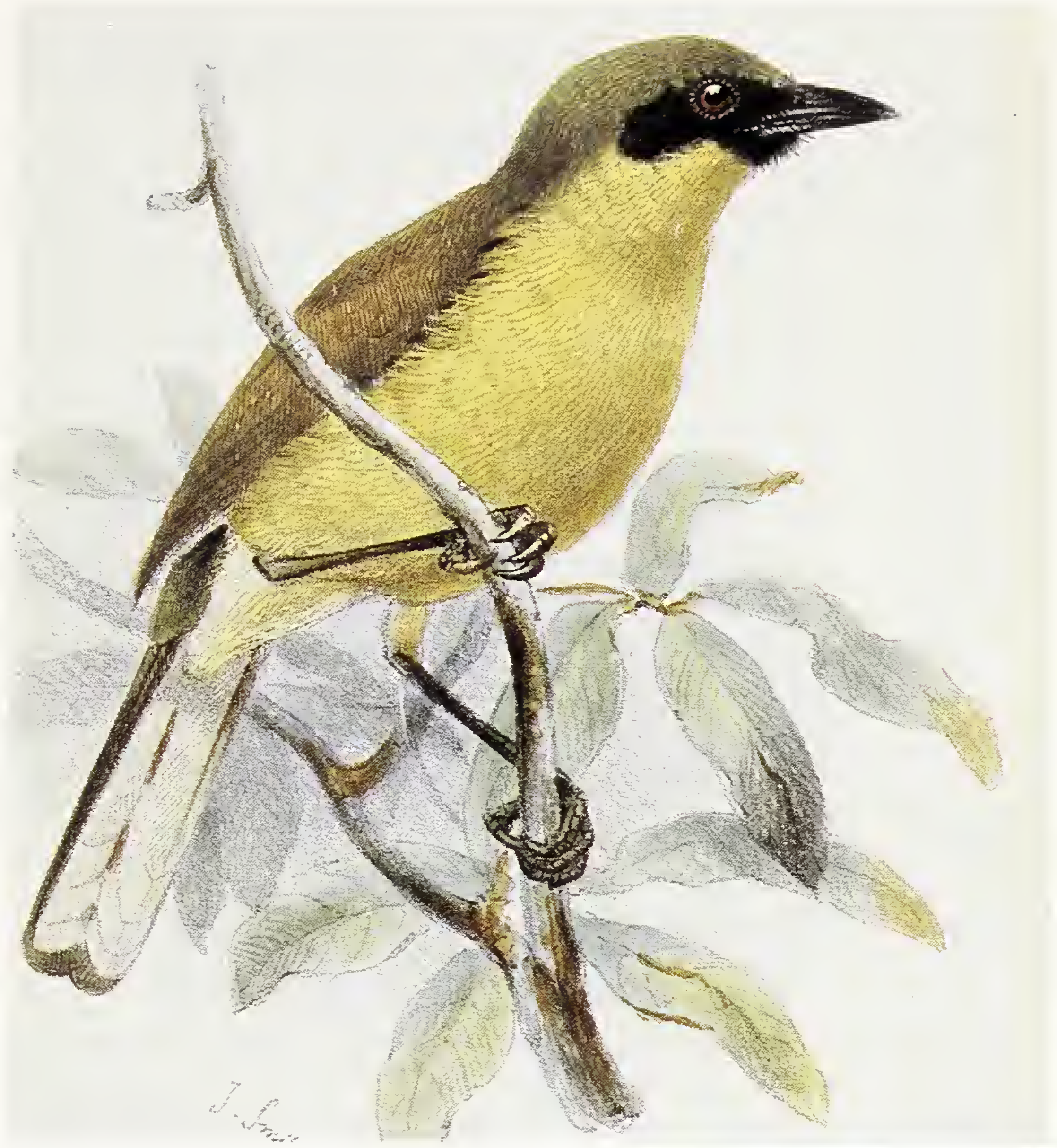
Ecology

Habitat

Information on habitat is mainly available for the nominate form, which is found in tall grass mixed with scattered trees and bushes. Godwin-Austen[12] saw the species mainly in high grass, which "they prefer to the denser forest"; birds seen along the Meluri trail, Nagaland, were in tall grass and cut-over scrub[24]. Hume[17] thought that they "prefer places where there is tall grass intermixed with trees, through the branches of which they hop and fly".

Baker[5] found a nest in a high bush on the outskirts of dense evergreen forest, and the recent sightings by Mark and Maire Beaman were of birds foraging in heavily cut-over secondary forest, dominated by oak and interspersed with tall grass (M. Beaman *in litt.* 1994). Cheng and Tang[8] state that *G. g. simaoensis* inhabits bushes.

Plate 1. Paintings of **Yellow-throated Laughingthrush**.
a) Nominate *Garrulax galbanus* reproduced from the paper giving the type description of the species written by Godwin-Austen and published in 1874 in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London.
b) *G. g. courtoisi* published in the paper by Ménegaux describing *G. courtoisi* in 1923 in Revue Française D'Ornithologie.



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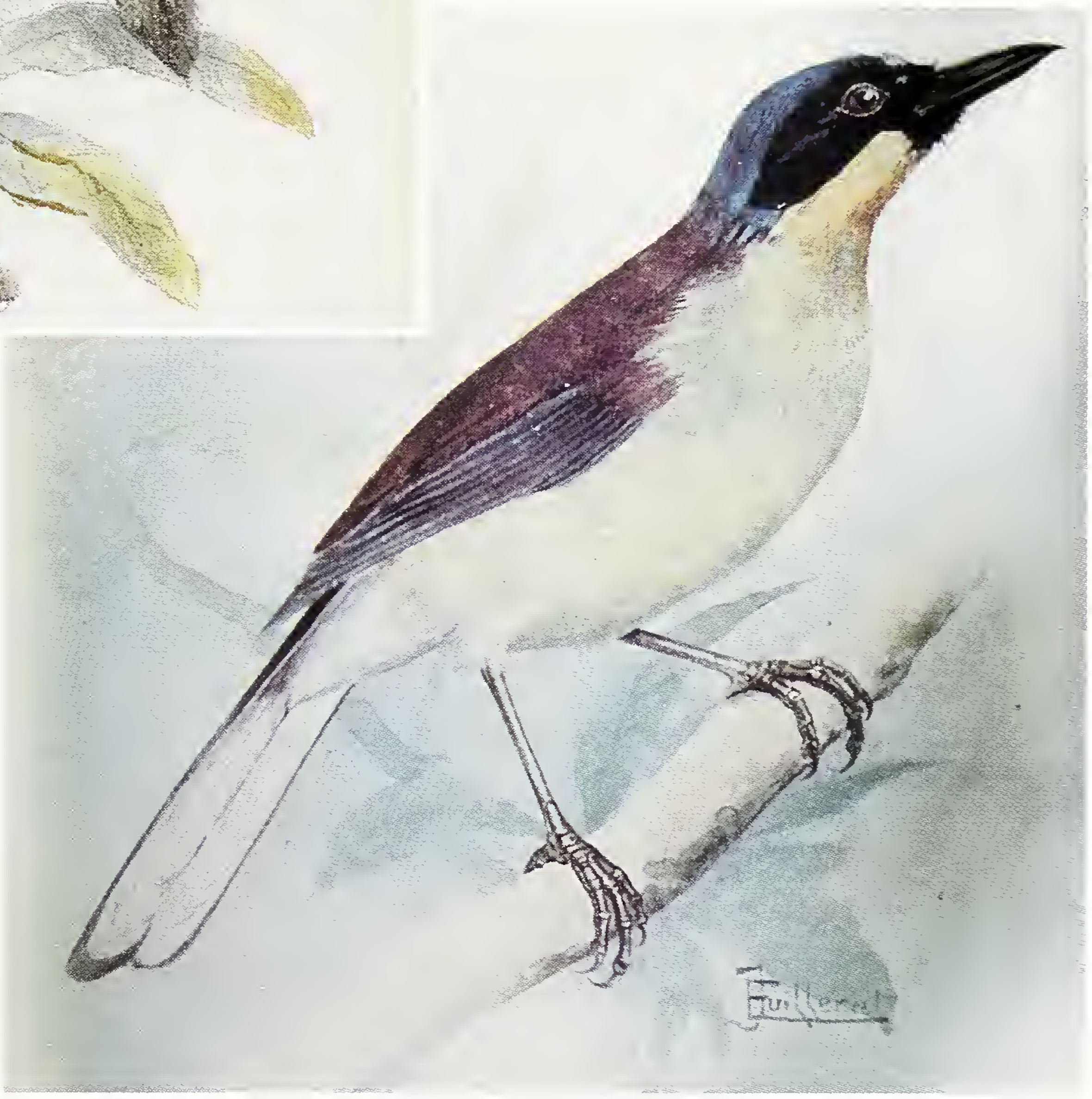
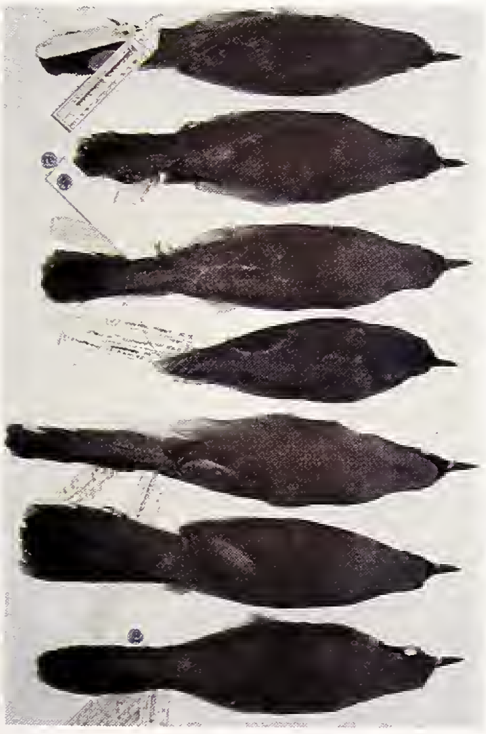


Plates 2 - 4.
Series of six specimens from BMNH of nomimate *galbanus* all collected in Manipur and one assigned to *simaoensis* (middle bird), which originated from a captive bird kept in Italy (see Pasini et al.[23]).
2) View of back; **3)** View of side; **4)** View of front (Photos: Robert Clay).

Plate 5. Type specimen of *Garrulax g. simaoensis* held in the Beijing Academica Sinica (Photo: R. Wirth).



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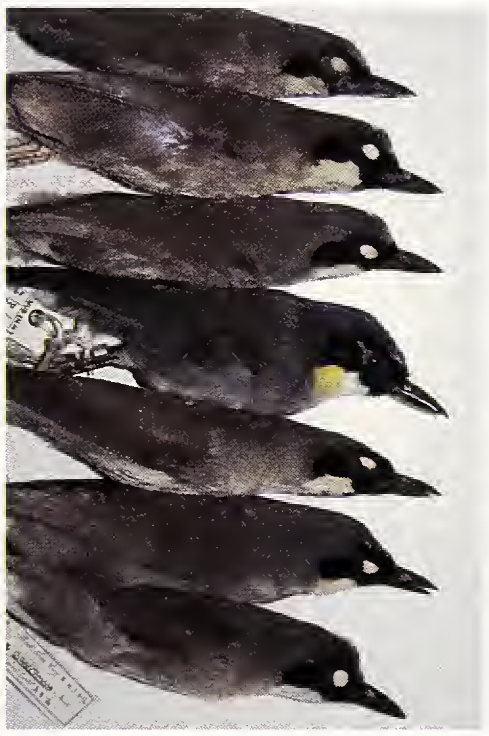

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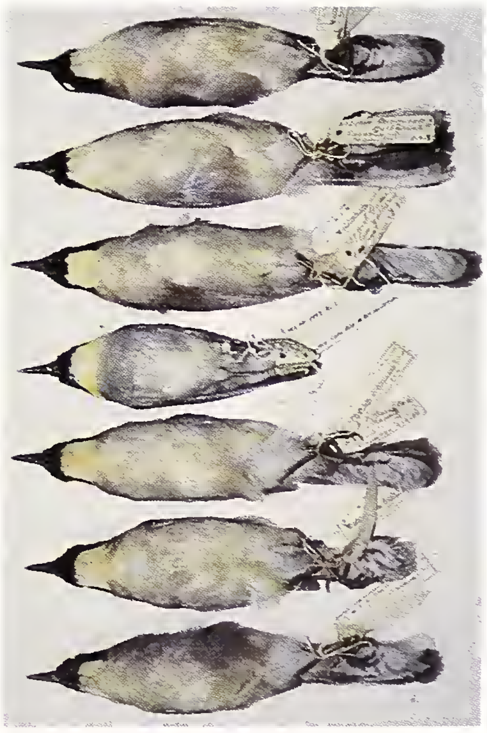

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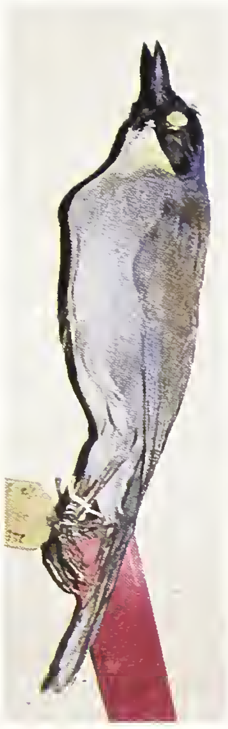

5

Its altitudinal range is described as c. 800 to 1,800 m[2]. Hume stated that he once found the species in Manipur "as high as 4,000 ft (1,250 m)", indicating that this was unusually high for the species, but the recent sighting in Manipur was from c.1,300 m (M. Beaman *in litt.* 1994) and in the Chin Hills Hopwood and Mackenzie[16] found the species at altitudes from 1,500 to 1,800 m. Baker[5] thought that, whilst the birds seem to be most abundant in summer between 1,500 and 1,800 m, they do breed both above and below these altitudes.

Behaviour

Hume[17] gives the most detailed account of their behaviour and habits: "they have a rather feeble chirping call, which they very frequently utter, and by which we could always trace them. Sometimes we found them in large but very widely scattered flocks, more often in pairs or small parties not exceeding six.

They often associate with the Rufous-necked Laughingthrush *Garrulax ruficollis*. They feed a great deal on the ground, chiefly on insects, but not, as I found by dissection, disdaining small seeds". Cheng and Tang[8] state that *G. g. simaoensis* are gregarious and noisy; there is no information on the habits of *G. g. courtoisi*.

Breeding

All information on breeding relates to the nominate form. In the Chin Hills, Hopwood and Mackenzie[16] found that egg-laying usually begins in about May, although they found a few nests with eggs in April, and Baker[5] thought that the egg-laying period also extended into June. The clutch size varies from two to four, but the latter is exceptional[5]. They are usually white, but occasionally pale blue. More details of their colouration and structure are given by Baker[3,5] and Hopwood and Mackenzie[16]. The eggs of the nominate form are smaller than those of captive bred *G. g. simaoensis*, but the sample size of the latter is small (Table 2).

Baker[3] found three nests, all of which were placed in tangles of wild raspberries and other creepers. Hopwood and Mackenzie[16] found a large number of nests, and described how they were generally built in the fork of a low bush or shrub at a height of two to ten feet in fairly open jungle, and not difficult to see. They describe the nest: "outside it is roughly made of grass-stems with the ends left sticking out untidily in all directions and is lined with yellow grass seed stems; in shape it is a large flattish cup, and there are often a few moss roots, and small twigs mixed with the main structure of the nest (but not with the lining). The general effect is a brown outside, lined yellow." Baker[5] thought that this yellow lining of the nest is always a distinguishing feature.

Conclusions and summary

A considerable amount of information has been collated on the distribution, abundance, ecology and morphology of the taxa in the *Garrulax galbanus* complex. The two subspecies described from China, *G. g. courtoisi* and *G. g. simaoensis*, differ from the nominate form by their blue crowns, darker tail pattern, bright yellow throat demarcated by duller underparts or breast band and larger size, and perhaps by warmer brown upperparts. These striking morphological differences suggest that they could together represent a distinct species, a treatment favoured by the authors of the accompanying article[23]. However, there are significant gaps in current knowledge which hinder a satisfactory resolution of this issue. In particular, the Chinese taxa remain remarkably poorly known, given that they have recently been obtained by several European zoos via the wild bird trade.

The known distributions of the nominate and the two Chinese subspecies do not meet or overlap (i.e. they are allopatric). Whether this is truly the case remains to be resolved, although the absence of records from central and eastern Myanmar, which were historically relatively well covered by ornithologists, suggests that *G. g. galbanus* is very likely to be disjunct from the others. In the absence of any evidence for their ranges meeting or overlapping, it is only possible to assess their taxonomic status as if they were allopatric. In such cases it is necessary to judge the significance of morphological, ecological and behavioural differences, to determine whether they would be likely to behave as good species were their ranges to meet. In this case, the plumage differences between the nominate and the two Chinese forms are probably of reproductive significance, and likely to act as a barrier to intergradation.

The relationship of *G. g. courtoisi* and *G. g. simaoensis* is problematical, given the paucity of specimens and absence of information from the field. The significance of the differences in the underpart colouration of the two forms is uncertain, because of the discrepancies in the descriptions by different authors, possibly partially a result of the fading of old specimens or the difficulty of describing textually such subtle plumage variations, but the most fundamental problem is that there are not enough specimens of known provenance to know whether the differences which have been observed are consistent.

Clearly what is needed are new field observations of these taxa, especially those in China. This would help to resolve whether the morphological differences described here are consistent, and how they vary geographically. Valuable new data on the vocalisations, ecology and behaviour of the different taxa may also be gathered. For example, it would be interesting (and perhaps taxonomically significant) to see if either of the Chinese taxa make nests with yellow linings, which Baker thought was very characteristic of those made by the nominate subspecies.

This study illustrates the difficulty of defining species limits with poorly known, apparently allopatric taxa. It also shows just how much information is waiting to be gathered on the birds of the Oriental Region, for example in the subtropical south and south-east of China. There might be field guides covering virtually all of the region, but this should not disguise the fact that basic information is still lacking on species's limits, ranges, ecology and voice for many taxa. OBC members have a great opportunity to contribute to improving knowledge of the region's birds.

Acknowledgements
We would especialy like to thank Carlo Violani and Roland Wirth who first notified us of the presence of the Chinese birds in European bird collections. Klaus Rudloff, Pete Morris, Borja Heredia, and Robert Clay kindly supplied photographs and Dr Robert Storer (USMZ), Dr Pamela Rasmussen (ANSP) and Dick Sloss (AMNH) examined specimens on our behalf. Ji Lin Ping translated several Chinese papers and Roland Wirth, Mark Beaman, Pete Morris, Nigel Redman, J. van Remsen and Roger Wilkinson provided additional information and leads which helped in the compilation of this article.

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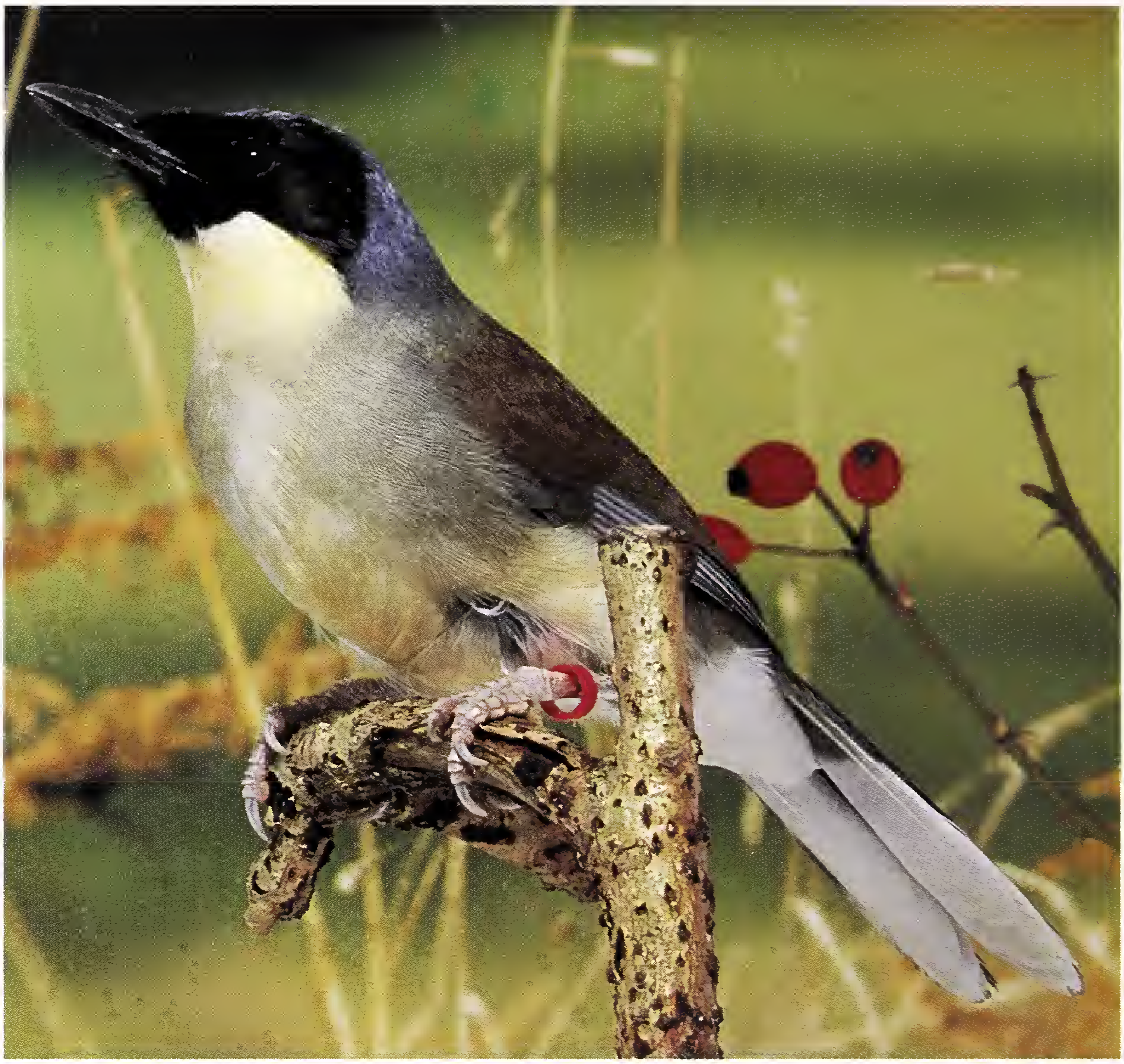
Plate 6.
Yellow-throated Laughingthrush assigned to *simaoensis*, taken at Chester Zoo (photo: Dennis Avon).



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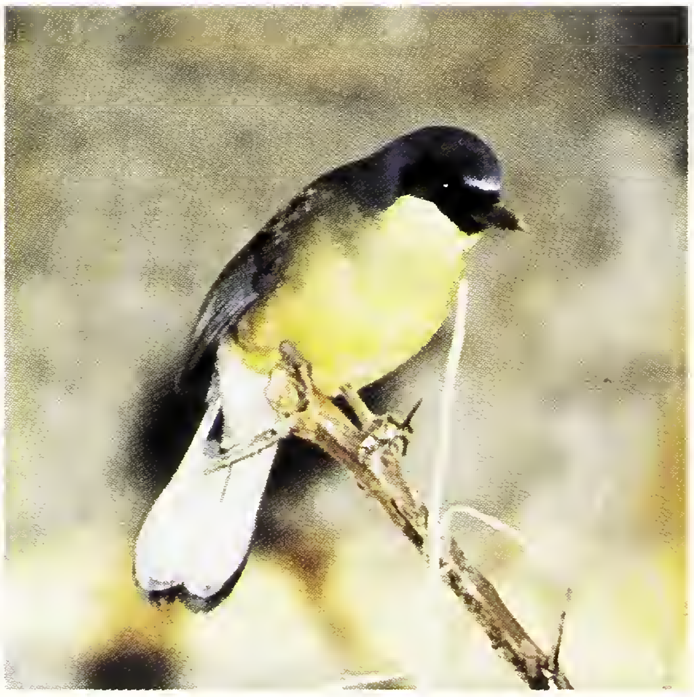
Plates 7 - 9.
Yellow-throated Laughingthrush assigned to *simaoensis*, taken at Tierpark Berlin-Friedrichsfelde (Photos: Klaus Rudloff).

Plate A. Yellow-throated Laughingthrush assigned to *simaoensis*, taken at an aviary in Italy (Photo: D. Arsuffi and P. Castellanza).



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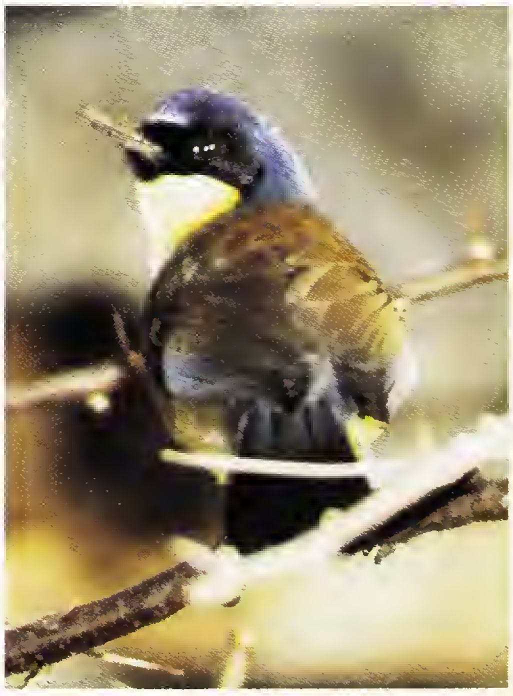

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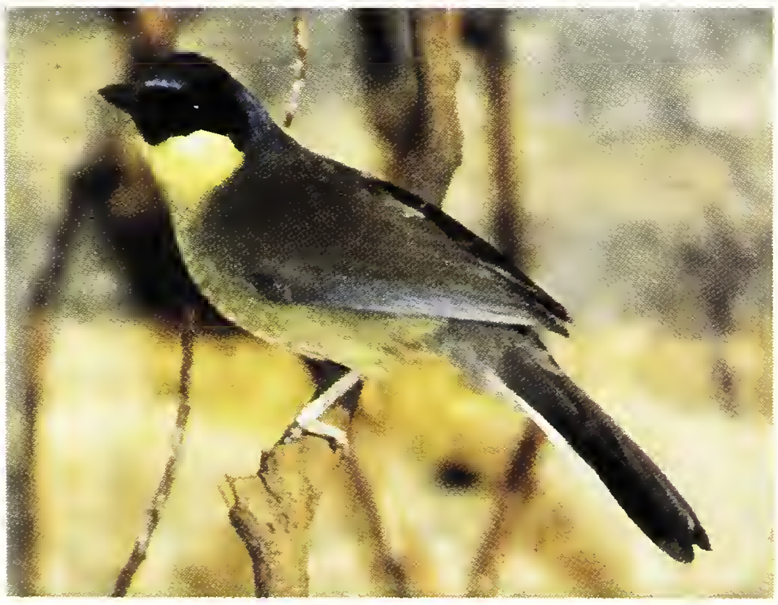

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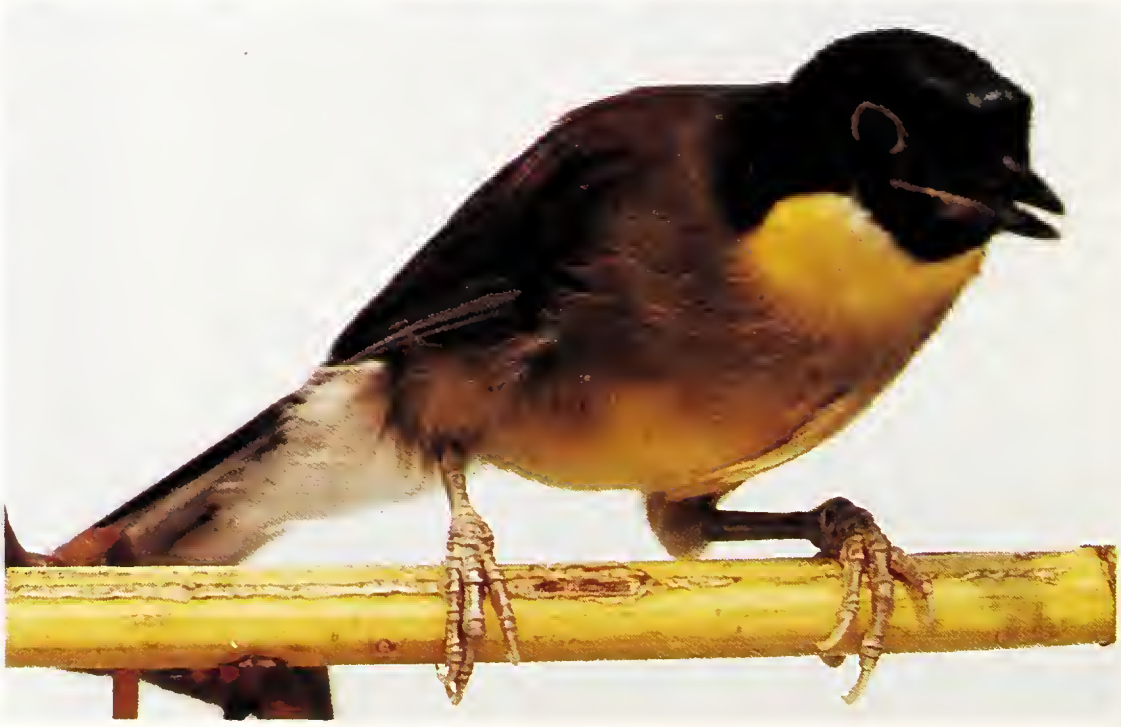

A

Identification and captive breeding of Yellow-throated Laugthingthrush *Garrulax galbanus*

Many thousands of birds arrive in Europe, not only during their annual migrations but through the wild bird trade. Identification to species is often difficult with birds from different regions of the world mixed-up in the same consignment. In this article the authors describe the investigations that they needed to carry out on a group of laughingthrushes that arrived in Italy and provide information on their identification and subsequent captive breeding.

In 1923 A. Ménegaux[6] of Paris Museum described the new species *Garrulax courtoisi* from Ouyuen, China, based upon two adult specimens collected in September 1919 and received from the Rev. Père F. Courtois, director of the Museum of Zi-Ka-Wei, near Shanghai. The type locality is also spelled Wuyuan by Deignan[3]. In a monograph devoted to the genus *Garrulax*, Professor J. Berlioz[1] of Paris Museum considered *courtoisi* as a very geographically isolated subspecies of *Garrulax galbanus*, which had been described in 1874[5] from the Manipur Valley, north-east India. Furthermore, Berlioz cast doubts upon the type locality of *courtoisi*, giving it as "Chine sud-orientale ?" and mentioning the two known specimens as "without a precise origin"[1]. *Garrulax courtoisi* has not been found again.

In 1982 Cheng Tso-Hsin, Professor Emeritus at the Academia Sinica, Beijing, and Tang Rui-Chang[2] described a related new taxon *Garrulax galbanus simaoensis* from Simao, Yunnan, China, which differs from *courtoisi* "in having a broad yellowish grey band across the chest".

In the spring of 1988 in northern Italy, Alberto Pasini found five individuals of a *Garrulax* species unknown to him in a mixed consignment of aviary passerines from a Hong Kong dealer (Figure A). He bought two of the five birds for breeding, basing the selection on his long experience as a bird-keeper, since they showed no evident sexual dimorphism.

Later on, based on Plate 30 in Etchécopar and Hüe[4], Pasini identified the birds as *Garrulax galbanus courtoisi*. However, he had some doubts about the birds' correct identity, as they were showing a rather dark breast collar which was not mentioned in the original description of *courtoisi*[6]. Thus, photographs of the living birds were sent to Dr Chr. Jouanin at Paris Museum and to Professor Cheng Tso-Hsin for comparison with the respective type specimens of *courtoisi* and *simaoensis*.

Dr Jouanin very kindly replied (*in litt.* 2 April 1993): "The two types of *G. courtoisi* Ménegaux are not perfect - one of them was prepared incorrectly with a breast torsion and its plumage is not in good condition. In the other specimen the beak is broken but the plumage is still good. The colour reproduction of the plate that was published in Ménegaux[6] is poor. In reality the throat is not orange but more a citrine yellow (approximately colour code no. 259 of Séguy's universal colour chart), the back is not red but brownish (approximately colour code no. 702) and, above all, there is no darker reddish area between the chin and breast as depicted in the plate. However, the colour of the plate for the rest of the underparts are better rendered. They are grey (colour near to no. 209 of Séguy) from the upper breast to the vent. It seems to me that the photographs that you sent me are distinguished from the specimens of *courtoisi* by the grey breast band that separates the yellow throat from the yellow belly. This is not the case in *courtoisi* where all lower underparts are tinted grey, more so on the flanks."

Professor Cheng Tso-Hsin kindly answered us (*in litt.*, 15 September 1993): "The pretty photos you enclosed in the letter are, indeed, of much interest to all of us, and the yellow-bellied babbler is surely to be *Garrulax galbanus simaoensis*, as so proposed in my paper on *A new subspecies of* **Garrulax galbanus** *from Yunnan, China*". From these descriptions, it would appear therefore that Alberto Pasini's birds belong to the subspecies *simaoensis*.

The putative pair were moved to the aviaries of Daniele Arsuffi, an experienced aviculturist, in the hope of getting them to breed. The pair bred successfully in 1991, building a nest towards the end of April. The first hatching occurred at the beginning of July from the third clutch (Figure B), the embryos dying inside the egg shells in the first and second attempts. The periods of incubation lasted 13-15 days; the clutch size varied from 3 to 5 eggs. The eggs were creamy white and six of them measured respectively: 27.3 x 20.0 mm, 27.7 x 20.1 mm, 27.9 x 20.5 mm, 27.7 x 20.1 mm, 28.5 x 20.2 mm, 29.0 x 20.1mm.

In 1992 five birds hatched from three different clutches. Currently, the original pair is still living, as well as one of the birds born in 1991 and the five from the 1992 breeding season.

In December 1993 C. Violani compared a series of *Garrulax galbanus* from India at the BMNH, Tring, with a specimen of one of the captive *simaoensis*, which had died while moulting (it was tailless). The *simaoensis* bird is distinctly separable from the Indian specimens, especially BY its dark-blue head and upper neck (not grey), darker brown upper parts, bluish-grey primaries and lemon-yellow throat. On these grounds we believe that *Garrulax courtoisi* should be treated best as a separate species from *galbanus*, though closely related to it, and *simaoensis* should be regarded as a distinct subspecies of *Garrulax courtoisi.* Some infertile eggs and the tailless specimen have been presented to the Natural History Museum, Tring.

Further investigation on the relationships between the three taxa (*Garrulax galbanus, Garrulax c. courtoisi and G. c. simaoensis*; as proposed here) and on the distribution range and current status of both *courtoisi* and *simaoensis* should be carried out.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Dr Chr. Jouanin and to Professor Cheng Tso-Hsing for their kind collaboration in comparing the types of *courtoisi* and *simaoensis* with our photos; to Mrs F. E. Warr, Librarian of the Natural History Museum, Tring, for helping us in the bibliographical research; to the Curators of the Natural Hisory Museum, Tring for kindly giving us kind access to the collections in their care, and finally, to Mike Crosby, BirdLife International, for his constant encouragement and support.

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Plate B. Young captive bred Yellow-throated Laughingthrushes (Photo: D Arsuffi and P Castellanza)

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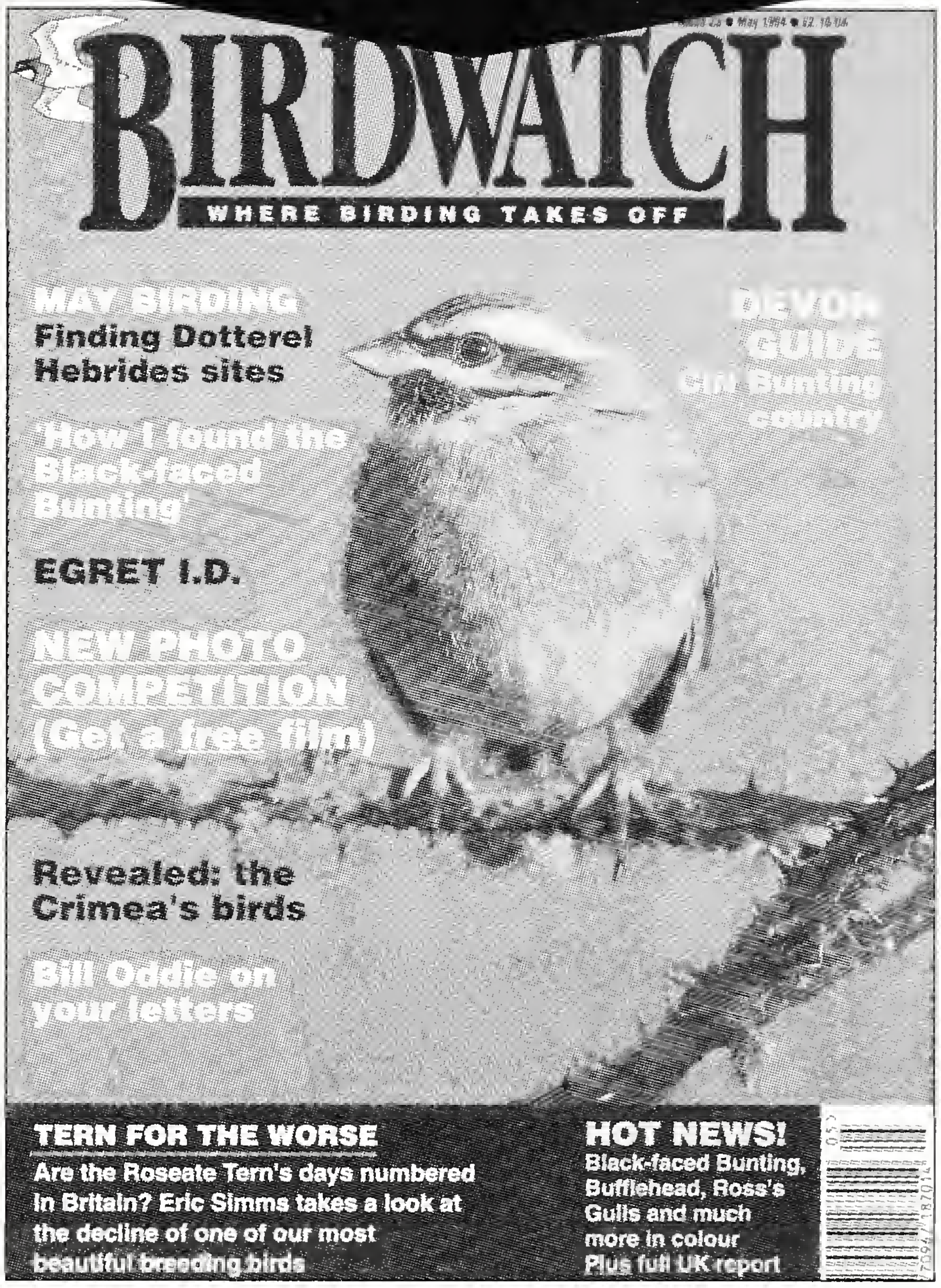

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Birds to Watch: Threatened birds in Singapore

A recent listing from the International Council for the Preservation of Birds or ICBP (now BirdLife International) included Singapore as a known site for three internationally threatened species, all waders, viz. Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Spoonbill Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*. While this revelation may come as a surprise to some people, it does not give the total picture and reflects the general lack of appreciation, locally as well as globally, of the importance of Singapore as a wintering ground for certain migrants, some of which are declining world-wide. In fact, of the more than 1,000 species listed in Collar and Andrew 1988 as under threat of global extinction, seven, including the three listed above, occur in Singapore[5]. A brief synopsis of each species is given below.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND FRIGATEBIRD *Fregata andrewsi*

Extralimital: Breeds only on Christmas Island, in the Indian Ocean, where 1,600 pairs are known. Non-breeding birds disperse north to Borneo, Singapore, Peninsular Malaysia, the Phi-Phi Islands of Thailand, east to Timor, Indonesia, and as far west as the Kenya coast[1].

Singapore: A very rare non-breeding visitor with under 5 records. Recent sightings are from Serangoon, Pulau Hantu, Pulau Ubin and the National Stadium.

CHINESE EGRET *Egretta eulophotes*

Extralimital: Breeds only on the islands off North Korea, South Korea and China. Recorded in winter mainly in the Philippines but also in smaller numbers, mainly on passage, from Hong Kong south to Singapore[1,7].

Singapore: An uncommon winter visitor with small numbers each year along the north coast. In recent years, the favoured site has shifted from the degraded Serangoon Estuary to the unprotected Seletar Estuary.

IMPERIAL EAGLE *Aquila heliaca*

Extralimital: Sparsely distributed from central and south-east Europe east to Lake Baikal in Russia and west Sinkiang, China. Normal wintering range includes north-east Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Indochina and east to Japan[3,7]. In recent years, stragglers have been recorded in Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore.

Singapore: A very rare winter visitor with under five records, all from Ponggol and first seen only in 1987.

NORDMANN'S GREENSHANK *Tringa guttifer*

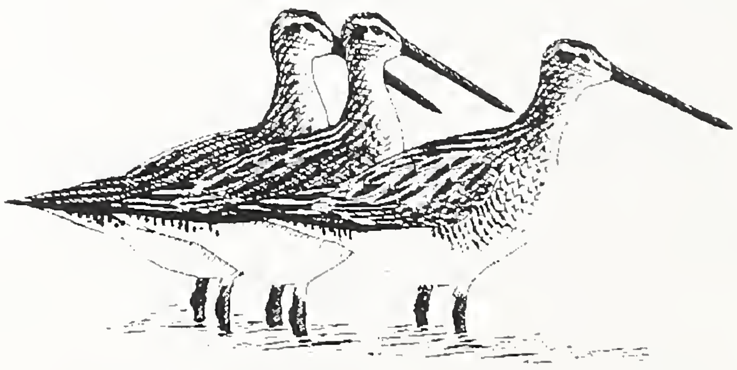
Extralimital: Breeds only on Sakhalin Island, and possibly in Kamchatka, the Bering islands and the Gulf of Okhotsk in Russia. Winters from China through the South-East Asian mainland down to Singapore[1].

Singapore: A very rare winter visitor with only two known records and none confirmed since 1981.

ASIAN DOWITCHER *Limnodromus semiplamatus*

Extralimital: Breeds in several, small, scattered colonies in Siberia, Mongolia and China. Winters and migrates through Japan, China, Hong Kong, the South-East Asian mainland, Singapore, to the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia. Since 1984, the largest winter concentration of more than 3,000 birds has been recorded in Sumatra[1].

Singapore: An uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant with small numbers present most years, usually along the north coast. The best site to see this species is still the Serangoon Estuary although sightings are becoming increasingly regular at Khatib Bongsu and Sungei Seletar.



Asian Dowitcher Limnodromus semipalmatus *by Craig Robson*

SPOONBILL SANDPIPER

Eurynorhynchus pygmeus

Extralimital: Breeds only in north-eastern Siberia from Chukotka south to Kamchatka with a breeding population estimated at 2,000 to 2,800 pairs. Has been recorded on passage or in winter in China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Bangladesh, India, Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore[1].

Singapore: A very rare winter visitor with only two records. Not seen since 1979.

BROWN-CHESTED JUNGLE-FLYCATCHER

Rhinomyias brunneata

Extralimital: Breeds in south-east China and winters largely in Peninsular Malaysia[1]. In recent years, it has been recorded fairly regularly in Thailand and Singapore, which is the southernmost wintering limit.

Singapore: A rare winter visitor and passage migrant in Singapore with one or two records yearly. First discovered in Singapore in 1980 and appears to frequent forest and well-wooded areas. During the main passage months of October and November, the Brown-chested Jungle-Flycatcher prefers the sparse coastal scrub of Singapore's eastern and western coasts as its stopover sites and can be located fairly easily.

Interestingly, another two of the 326 species recorded in Singapore in the last fifty years[5], both introduced, are also considered as threatened. The **Yellow-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua sulphurea* is an escape which has been recorded in Singapore since the 1950s but is still largely confined to the more developed southern half of Singapore and the southern islands. In its native range of Sulawesi and the Lesser Sundas, however, it is being threatened by collectors who trap birds in numbers for the lucrative cagebird trade despite laws prohibiting their exploitation. A similar plight also befalls the **Tanimbar Cockatoo** *C. goffini*, which was for a long time misidentified locally as the **Little Corella** *C. sanguinea* (see Hails[2]) and has been in Singapore for less than two decades. Though it is an uncommon endemic of the Tanimbar Islands of Indonesia, it is now our most successful cockatoo, being present throughout Singapore, particularly in the south. This sad and ironic state of affairs highlights a well known fact: the cagebird trade is still alive and thriving in Singapore despite the signing of CITES in 1990 by the government.

Of the many species classified as near-threatened, or not now at risk but possibly facing extinction in the near future, six are found in Singapore. Of these, four are residents which are threatened locally and have already been discussed in Lim[5,6]. A brief synopsis of the six is given below:

SCHRENCK'S BITTERN *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*

Extralimital: East Asia.

Singapore: An uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant in Singapore with a few records annually. Frequents wet reedbeds and grasslands as well as marshes, forested streams and mangrove edge.

MALAYAN NIGHT-HERON

Gorsachius melanolophus

Extralimital: South-East Asia.

Singapore: A very rare passage migrant and winter visitor in Singapore with under ten records. Extremely secretive; frequents forest streams and wooded areas.

GREAT-BILLED HERON *Ardea sumatrana*

Extralimital: South-East Asia, Australasia.

Singapore: Classified as endangered in Lim[5,6]. A rare resident of the southern islands, none of which is protected.

MALAYSIAN PLOVER *Charadrius peronii*

Extralimital: Indonesia, West Malaysia.

Singapore: Classified as indeterminate in Lim[5,6]. A very rare resident of the Changi Coast with a miniscule population of less than 20 birds.

MANGROVE PITTA *Pitta megarhyncha*

Extralimital: Bangladesh, south-east to Sumatra.

Singapore: Rated as endangered by Lim[5,6]. A very rare resident in Singapore with the last surviving birds found only on the islands of Pulau Tekong Besar and Pulau Ubin.

Mangrove Pitta Pitta megarhyncha *by Craig Robson*

STRAW-HEADED BULBUL
Pycnonotus zeylanicus

Extralimital: Thailand, Greater Sundas, West Malaysia.

Singapore: Classified as vulnerable in Lim[5,6]. A rare resident in Singapore with the population of about 60 concentrated aroung Senoko-Ulu Sembawang-Mandai in the north and the island of Pulau Ubin.

Ultimately, the future survival of these threatened and near-threatened species in Singapore depends on the protection of their last remaining breeding or wintering sites. For some migratory species, especially the waders, the future appears to be extremely bleak. In recent years, the ornithologically important northern coastline has been heavily developed and the density and diversity of waders recorded have declined markedly. The impending development (for a coastal highway) of the Ponggol side of the degraded but still vital Serangoon Estuary may mark the end for many species, including the three globally-threatened wader species for which Singapore is famed.

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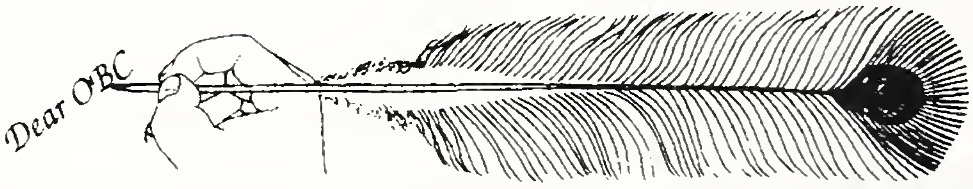
To the editor



A mystery woodcock in the Philippines

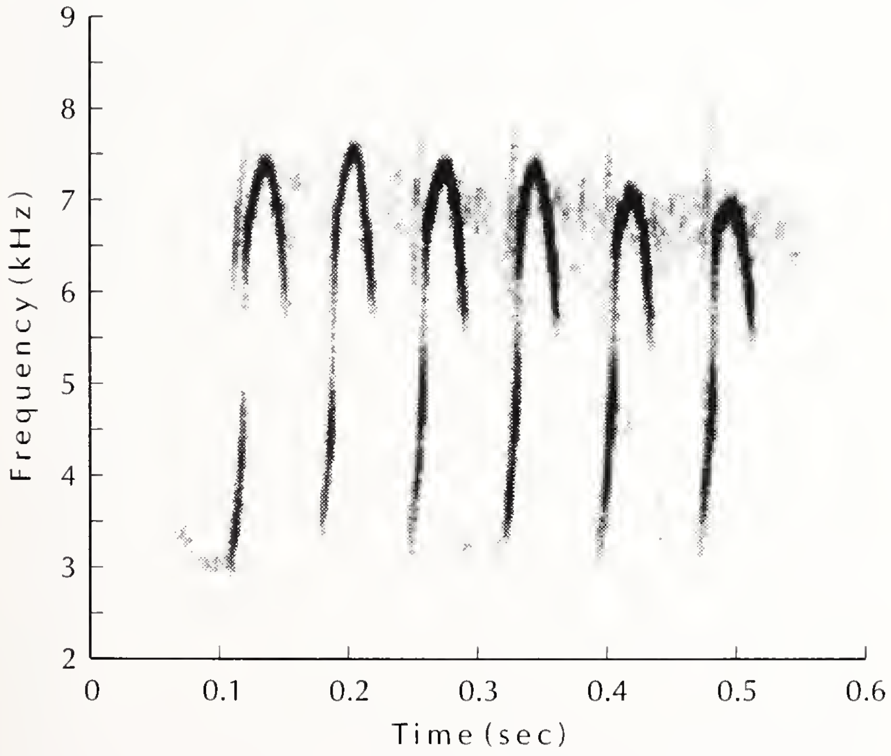
On 18 February 1993 we were leading a Birdquest tour group on Mount Katanglad in northern Mindanao, Philippines. Late in the afternoon, whilst walking along a trail past a relict patch of forest at about 1,600 m, we flushed a large bird from the side of the path. Views were very brief, but we gained the impression that the bird was a rather large woodcock *Scolopax* sp., which was overall russet or dark chocolate-brown in colouration. We knew that no woodcock was resident in the Philippines, and that Eurasian Woodcock *S. rusticola* was a rare visitor to Luzon (with just six records documented by Dickinson *et al.*[2]), but with no records from Mindanao. The bird did not appear to be that species, however, being too large and perhaps too rufous in coloration. Discussion moved on to Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola,* which was thought to be a potential vagrant. But, with such fleeting views, its identification seemed destined to remain unresolved.

Before dawn on 19 February, whilst searching for night birds near our camp site, situated adjacent to some forest patches at about 1,250 m, SH's attention was drawn to an unfamiliar rattling sound, coming in bursts and apparently emanating from something flying over the forest canopy. The identity of the source was obscure, with a large insect or even a bat being possibilities. SH drew the attention of TF and the accompanying group to the noise, but everyone was equally at a loss as to its identity. "It's the woodcock roding" was mooted, but half in jest.

Early on 20 February, in the same forest patch, we heard the rattling call again. Its source circled the forest several times and eventually flew overhead, showing briefly against the sky in silhouette. As it flew overhead, we heard a subdued low croaking or grunting interspersed between the rattles: it clearly was a roding woodcock. That same morning, Magnus Aurivillius and Magnus Jäderblad had made a pre-dawn foray to the forest patch at 1,600 m where we had our first sighting of the mystery woodcock. They also thought that the call and silhouette related to a roding woodcock with a remarkably straight and fast flight.

The bird was seen and heard again in late February 1993 by TF and Ben King (who obtained some excellent tape recordings), and then again in January 1994 by TF, Pete Morris and Nina Higgins, who observed two birds following one another in the roding flight, making several circuits of the forest patch at both dawn and dusk. When SH and TF returned on 17 February only one or two circuits by a single bird were observed, just before dawn (05h25-05h40) and at dusk (c.18h15); the woodcock even appeared when it was raining hard.

By stationing ourselves outside the forest, we were able to make more prolonged observations. However, few plumage details were observed, merely that the underparts were unmarked orange-buff and there were white tips to the tail feathers. The bird is very shy of lights; trying to illuminate it with a bright spotlight resulted in it almost tumbling in flight and an immediate cessation of the roding flight. Despite the difficult conditions, Björn Anderson succeeded in taking a photograph of the bird, which appears to show fine barring on the secondaries, and what may be a dark cap coming to a point above a pale forehead. TF returned to the site on 25-27 March, but the woodcocks had apparently stopped roding.



Sonogram of the roding call of the unidentified woodcock (band width 300 Hz)

The Mindanao woodcocks' roding call consists of a rapid rattle or twitter composed of about six elements (see sonogram), repeated regularly about every 2-3 seconds, resembling a burst of high-pitched machine gun fire. This is interspersed with a low croaking noise, only audible at very close range, which may be transcribed as very low *"burp burp"* (and resembles a frog or even the 'groan' made by imitation leather garments!). Copies of the recordings have been deposited in the National Sound Archive of the British Library.

The identity of the mystery woodcock remains unresolved. The vocalisations clearly eliminate Eurasian Woodcock; Amami Woodcock *S. mira* is not known to have a roding flight (display taking place on the ground[1], M. Brazil pers. comm. 1994), and the large size and unmarked underparts appear to rule out the smaller Dusky Woodcock *S. saturata*. Moluccan Woodcock *S. rochussenii* is known from just eight specimens, all from Obi and Bacan, the last obtained in 1980[3,4]. It has unmarked ochre-buff underparts, perhaps too pale for the Mindanao birds, but cannot be fully excluded. The most likely candidate on biogeographic grounds is the Sulawesi Woodcock *S. celebensis*. It is a large woodcock with dull ochre-buff underparts, and is close in appearance to the Mindanao woodcocks. It has been seldom seen, and its vocalisations are poorly known. Ben King, who has heard the Sulawesi Woodcock, opines that its voice is not similar to that of the Mindanao bird (pers. comm. to TF). The final possibility is that the Mindanao birds represent a new species. Clearly, a close examination and comparison of the voice and plumage of these mystery birds with other woodcock taxa, especially the morphologically similar Sulawesi Woodcock is needed to resolve the identity of these birds.

Just why the Mindanao woodcocks were not seen until 1993 remains a mystery. It may be that they are recent colonists from Sulawesi, but the more likely explanation is that they have been overlooked. Notably, the roding activity of the woodcocks was much reduced in duration in February 1994 compared to February 1993, when they had almost demanded attention. Variations from year to year in the pattern of activity may have resulted in the woodcocks being unobtrusive in the periods when most birdwatchers visit the area, although the area is in fact poorly known ornithologically.

As a postscript, Torben Lund and other Danish birdwatchers flushed woodcocks on three occasions in May 1992 on Mount Cetaceo, in the northern Sierra Madre of northern Luzon. They were silent, but appeared rather dark and were thought not to have been Eurasian Woodcocks (T. Lund *in litt.* 1993).

Acknowledgments
Many thanks to Richard Ranft of the National Sound Archive for preparing the sonogram, and to Björn Anderson and Nigel Redman for comments on the draft and to Torben Lund for supplying details of the woodcocks seen on Luzon.

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The authors are trying to trace tape recordings of Dusky and Sulawesi Woodcocks and would be pleased to receive copies, which will be acknowledged and returned. Please contact Simon Harrap at the above address. Eds.

A possible sighting of Diabolical Eared-Nightjar *Eurostopodus diabolicus* in Sulawesi

The Diabolical Eared-Nightjar *Eurostopodus diabolicus* is known from only a single specimen collected by Heinrich on 5 March 1931 in the lowlands of north-east Sulawesi, Indonesia. Shortly after first light on 30 July 1993, at about 1,700 m along a road in Lore Lindu National Park, central Sulawesi, a nightjar that probably belonged to this species, was seen by myself and four members of a KingBird Tour. The distance of the observation and the lack of corroborating details, coupled with the presence of a Great Eared-Nightjar *E. macrotis* nearby, suggests caution. However, it seems important to give details of the observation in the hope that others will be able to verify what would be only the second ever record of the species.

The nightjar was seen on a small branch about 0.5 m above the ground at the edge of the road. We approached by jeep until the bird was about 20 m away. It was in profile and appeared entirely dark (blackish) with a bold rusty buff patch on the side of the neck. No white was seen either on the throat or on the wing. The head shape of the bird appeared to be normal, and not the distinctive head shape of the Great Eared-Nightjar.

The bird was observed with 10 x 42 binoculars with the aid of a bright 6 D-cell flashlight with a narrow focal beam. We watched it through our binoculars for about 30 seconds until it flew off and disappeared. When we got out of the jeep, we could hear a Great Eared-Nightjar calling in flight in the distance.

The sole specimen of Diabolical Eared-Nightjar is in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York, USA. I was able to examine the specimen and compare it with specimens of Great Eared-Nightjar from Sulawesi.

The Diabolical Eared-Nightjar specimen is labelled female. It is entirely blackish with a broad rusty buff band (over 1 cm in width) on the sides of the neck, extending across the throat like a necklace. This band does not extend around the back of the neck. The primaries are entirely black, except for a small white spot on the outer web from shaft to edge of the 4th primary (counting from outside) measuring about 4 mm in width. The blackish scapulars, tertiaries and wing coverts have small pale rusty spots that could look like bands in the field. The black breast and belly have rusty buff bands.

The Great Eared-Nightjar in Sulawesi has a narrow buffy collar around the back and sides of the neck, meeting a white patch at both sides of the throat. Pale brown tertials and inner scapulars contrast with the dark remainder of the wings. The breast is dark, contrasting with the pale brown belly. The black outer primaries have buff to rusty vermiculations which could look like bars.

During our views of the mystery nightjar, we could see neither spotting nor vermiculations on the primaries. I feel that if the bird were a Great Eared-Nightjar, we might well have seen the paler scapulars and tertials or belly (one or the other), and we should have been able to see the white patch on the side of the throat. I have never noted such a bold rusty buff patch on the side of the neck on the many Great Eared-Nightjars that I have seen.

The very small white patch in the wing of Diabolical Eared-Nightjar could easily have been concealed, but if the bird had been a nightjar other than the two *Eurostopodus* species, our view of the bird taking flight should have been adequate to see large white or buff wing or tail patches.

The Great Eared-Nightjar catches its insect prey while flying at tree top level, which is where we heard one calling. It would be unusual for this species to be perching at the prime time for feeding.

I feel strongly that the use of the word Satanic[1], with such strong negative religious connotations, has no place in an English name for a bird. That is why I have used the name Diabolical Eared-Nightjar for this enigmatic species throughout this note.

Ben King, Ornithology Department, AMNH, Central Park West, @ 79th Street, New York, NY 10024, USA.

[1]*Sibley and Monroe use the name Satanic Eared-Nightjar, but in this instance we have complied with the author's wishes and not followed them. The word Diabolical may equally have religious connotations to many and therefore a more suitable name for the species might be Sulawesi Eared-Nightjar. Eds.*

Are frogmouths "living flytraps"?

In the May 1993 issue of the *OBC Bulletin*, I wrote an article[1] about the Ceylon Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger* and I made some comments on roosting birds' rather unusual reaction to approaching human intruders: "When approached too close they open their mouths wide revealing the extraordinarily large gape and the small grey flap of a tongue - evidently a threat gesture!". Jared Diamond[2] recently wrote an article concerning tribal hunters and their knowledge of local natural histories. He proposed, on the basis of conversations with two very credible Papuan tribesmen, that the open mouth posture of the frogmouth is probably because they secrete a smelly, sticky saliva from the mouth which acts as a chemical bait and lures insect prey. The tribesmen reported that insects fall into the open cavernous jaw of Papuan Frogmouths *Podargus papuensis*. Diamond also referred to a note written by an Australian birdwatcher who reportedly had seen this happen in a captive frogmouth.

My own observations do not support the flytrap hypotheses. Frogmouths are very wary even at roost, being well aware of human intrusion near their roosting sites. They do not get agitated, but rely on cryptic colouration to escape attention. However, they frequently keep a cautious eye on the intruder through narrowed eyelids which may appear tightly shut. I realised this when I detected subtle changes in the angle of the neck of roosting, apparently fast asleep birds as I manoeuvred around to get better views of them. Could it be that the Papuan tribesmen had simply encountered roosting birds which were expressing resentment at being disturbed? Is the "flytrap" as much a misnomer as "goatsucker"?

I write this to stimulate interest amongst oriental birders on this intriguing 'flytrap hypothesis'. Here is an interesting problem for chemical ecologists and ornithologists alike. The former could analyze saliva of frogmouths and compare their chemistry with that of the saliva of other bird species, and the latter could throw more light on the subject by observations of frogmouths in wild and in captivity.

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It should be noted that Sibley and Monroe place the Australian frogmouths in Podargidae (comprising solely of the genus Podargus*) and the Asian species in a separate family, Batrachostomidae i.e. they are evolutionarily convergent in appearance but not necessarily in behaviour.* Eds.

Sightings of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* in northern Thailand

During a visit to Thailand in 1989, I spent two full days at Ban Tha Ton, Mae Ai District, Chiang Mai Province, 20°03'N 99°20'E, adjacent to the Burmese border in the extreme north of the country, where a total of 12 Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* was recorded. Since Boonsong Lekagul and Round[2] indicate that the species is a virtually unknown passage migrant in Thailand, these observations merit comment.

Soon after dawn (06h00) on 21 April 1989 in misty conditions, two individuals were observed 'hawking' for insects low over the Khok River and fields bordering its northern bank. During the ensuing 20 minutes, further birds arrived from the south. Subsequently, the resulting party of seven falcons was watched at close range (30-50 m) for a further ten minutes, in what by then were largely clear conditions. Initially, the falcons continued to circle low over the river, but then several drifted off northwards. Upon arriving back at the riverside at 09h30, there was no sign of any of these birds. A further five birds were observed going north, four just before dusk (18h30) on the same day and one at dawn on the following morning.

The party of seven birds consisted of at least two adult males, at least one adult female and of at least two 1st summer males. The combination of dark grey head, breast and upperparts, white wing linings, chestnut belly and undertail coverts, and red cere and orbital skin exhibited by the adult males, was unmistakable. The 1st summer males showed less white on the underwing coverts, whilst the female watched was browner, had a pale breast, was less rufous below and displayed a yellowish cere.

Amur Falcons breed in Siberia (Transbaikalia, Amurland, Ussuriland), eastern China (from Heilongjiang in the north-east southwards to Anhwei and westwards to Shensi province) and in North Korea[8]. It has been reported as breeding (formerly?) in India too (North Cachar)[1]. The species winters in east and southern Africa (Malawi southwards to the Transvaal in South Africa)[3]. Observations show that its long south-westerly, autumn migration route, which is underway by September[11], takes it through Myanmar[10], north-east India, where large numbers have been noted in Assam, Bangladesh, and the Indian peninsula (with most records coming from the south-west)[1]. The species has been recorded also from Laos and Hong Kong[7], Bhutan[5], Nepal[4] and from Sri Lanka and the Maldive Islands[9]. The necessary crossing of the Indian Ocean is poorly documented.

Departure from Africa begins before the end of February. Birds pass through India and Burma during April/early May, which accords well with the timing of the sightings documented here. The Amur Falcon is known too to migrate in flocks[8] and, in Africa during winter, leaves overnight roosts immediately after dawn[3].

With regards to Thailand, Boonsong Legakul and Round[2] show the species to have occurred only in the north (this record) and in Chanthaburi Province in the south-east (a specimen was taken in the mid-1960s, but no further details are available). There is, however, one additional sighting which was omitted from their map (Round, pers. comm.); a female was shot at Ban Kao, Kanchanaburi Province in the south-west of the country in 1961 (11 November)[6]. Given the aforementioned details of the migratory route of *F. amurensis*, it seems that further additional records from Thailand are most likely to come similarly from the extreme north of the country, with the late April/early May period affording probably the best opportunities for an encounter.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Philip D. Round for scrutinising a preliminary draft of the manuscript, and for supplying information and a reprint relating to the previous records of *Falco amurensis* in Thailand.

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Recently published

Birds of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka *by Bikram Grewal. The Guidebook Company Ltd, Hong Kong, and Gulmohar Press Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1993. 193pp, over 300 colour photos, £14.99 (sb).*

Looking at the local tourist traffic at Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur or Ranganthitoo Bird Sanctuary at Mysore, bird watching is becoming popular among Indians. Salim Ali's *The book of Indian birds* is in its 13th edition, but no matter how good an illustration is, it is not comparable to a well-taken picture. However, a photograph that depicts all the major characteristics of a particular species is difficult to capture. This is amply proved by Bikram Grewal's book.

This is the first photographic guide to the birds of the Indian subcontinent, depicting 280 species, with a short description on size, general features, food, voice, habitat and range. For a serious birdwatcher, there is not much additional information to what is already available in Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley's ten volume tome *Handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan*, and T. J. Roberts's *The birds of Pakistan*; but for beginners this book is an excellent introduction to Indian birds.

Grewal has selected photographs from 41 photographers and photo-libraries (lack of photo credits with the picture must have annoyed many photographers). The most remarkable thing about the book is that it has some excellent pictures of rare or secretive birds (e.g. Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps* and Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra*) but bad ones of bold and common birds (e.g. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*, Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus*). Surprisingly, very common birds (at least in north India) such as White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Cotton Pygmy-goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* are not depicted.

This book is intended for a layman and a beginner but the tips on birdwatching are short, almost telegraphic in brevity, while the diagram showing major features of a bird is given at the end, instead of at the beginning. Systematic indices of families, species, common and scientific names have increased the value of the book, while a review of current and suggested alternative names will greatly help beginners and experts alike. The significance of the square before each species is not given in this index, and I suggest that in future editions that species illustrated in the book should be shown by a black square.

With the price of £14.99 I wonder how many Indians can afford this book.

Asad R. Rahmani

Coloured Wild Birds of Korea *by Yoon, Moo-Boo. Price (Korean Won) 25,000 (hb), 1993. ISBN 89-09-00851-2 96490.*

A Field Guide to the Birds of Korea *by Won, Pyong-Oh, 1993. Price (Korean Won) 20,000 (hb).*

Both books published by Kyohak Publishing Co. Ltd, 105-67 Kongduk-dong, Map'o-gu, Seoul, Korea.

Two excellent field guide-sized photographic guides to Korean birds, both with pages stacked full of stunning photographs of many little known eastern birds: Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, Schrenck's Bittern *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*, Japanese Night-Heron *Gorsachius goisagi*, cliff-nesting Black-faced Spoonbills *Platalea minor*, Fairy Pitta *Pitta nympha*, Chinese Grey Shrike *Lanius sphenocercus*, Grey-backed Thrush *Turdus hortulorum* and Middendorff's Warbler *Locustella ochotensis* to name but a few.

Although both are written in Korean, they include English, Latin and Japanese names. Won Pyong Oh's is the more comprehensive of the two, including photographs of all but a dozen species ever recorded in the country, and by far the best and most comprehensive checklist with status yet published for Korea.

A few identification mistakes have crept into both books, but this does not detract from them, as many of the photos are pure art: a summer plumage Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, a Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* in the snow, and series of Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia* and Varied Tit *Parus varius*.

Unfortunately, both books are currently only available in Korea, but Yoon's at least is in the process of being translated into English, so there is hope that they may be available in the future.

Colin Poole

Sold for a Song, the Trade in Southeast Asian non-CITES Birds *by Stephen V. Nash: TRAFFIC International, Cambridge, U.K., 1993. ISBN 1 85850 022 2.*

The Wild Bird Trade in Hong Kong and Mainland China *by David Dick, Andrew Jones, Duncan McNiven, Keith Morton and Hans Peeters: RSPB/Vogelbescherming Nederland, no date [1993].*

The effect of the international bird trade on many endangered and rare species has been highlighted in recent campaigns which have persuaded many airlines not to carry wild birds. Over 2,600 of the 9,600 bird species have been recorded in international trade in the past 20 years – almost as many as the total number of species found in the Oriental Region. Singapore probably has the most species-rich bird trade in the region, and the TRAFFIC report identified 247 species and eight subspecies of non-CITES South-East Asian birds traded, based on 3,248 observations of at least 128,000 specimens. The report notes that in Indonesia, "Ownership of rare and protected species . . . is a popular way of showing that one is sufficiently important and powerful to be immune from prosecution under wildlife infractions." Moreover, many birds such as herons, kingfishers, and woodpeckers are sold as novelties and inexpensive toys for children, and are not expected to last more than a few weeks. The report covers 11 countries, and concludes that the non-CITES bird trade in South-East Asia is on a much larger scale than was previously believed. Among other recommendations, it calls for accurate data to be collected and for legislation in Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam in particular to be improved.

The RSPB/Vogelbescherming Nederland report is based on an investigation in Hong Kong and southern China in December 1992, and also considers U.K. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) requirements concerning direct imports of birds to Britain. 'In all cases it was discovered that any export of wild birds from Hong Kong or southern China would be in contravention of these requirements. This was of little concern to exporters, however, as the MAFF requirements could be circumvented by importing via other EC countries', the report states. The investigators examined bird shops and markets in Hong Kong, Guangzhou (Canton), Shenzhen and Nanning, capital of Guangxi province, and note how the trade has been boosted by China's economic reforms which have greatly increased demand for luxuries such as rare birds and animals. Among birds on sale in Shenzhen were two globally threatened species, Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, and Sichuan Partridge *Arborophila rufipectus*, while Omei Shan Liocichla *Liocichla omeiensis* and Giant Nuthatch *Sitta magna* were mentioned in lists obtained from the Hong Kong Bird Shop; the largest exporter in the territory.

These reports make fairly depressing reading, but they are the product of much valuable research and it is to be hoped that the governments involved take some steps at least to control a trade that is plundering irreplaceable national assets.

Michael Rank

Wildlife Protection in Tibet. [Xizang Zhenxi Yesheng Dongwu yu Baohu] *by Liu Wulin and Yin Binggao (eds.). Beijing: China Forestry Publishing House, 1993. [In Chinese, with 10-page English summary]. ISBN 7 5038 1095 5.*

This volume is the latest of a series of studies published in China on the biology of the Qinghai-Tibet plateau. It includes brief sketches of selected birds, mainly culturally important species such as pheasants, cranes and birds of prey. For example, it puts the Tibetan Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis* breeding population at about 1,000 and wintering numbers at over 3,000; it reports that about 2,000 Himalayan Griffons *Gyps himalayensis* were counted in a survey conducted in 1987-89, while only a single Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos* was discovered in 1986-89.

The book gives details of several nature reserves, some of them vast, including the Qangtang (Changtang) reserve covering 247,120 km^2 which is said to be the biggest in the world. It notes that although this is the most sparsely populated region in Tibet, the population is growing as more roads are built, especially in the south, and the pressure from livestock and hunting is increasing.

Not surprisingly perhaps, little is said in a book published by the Ministry of Forestry about deforestation, reported to be a serious threat to wildlife in much of Tibet due to commercial logging as well as felling trees for firewood and building. However, this book contains much valuable information on the wildlife and topology of one of the remotest and least known areas in the world.

Michael Rank

Free Press

Compiled by Guy Dutson

This new section aims to publicise recent papers and reports of interest to OBC members. Hundreds of relevant articles are published annually, so only a relatively small number can be included here. Topics given priority for inclusion include conservation, status and taxonomy of Oriental birds. Members publishing such papers in obscure journals or reports, or who have written trip reports, are invited to send a copy for review to 'Free Press', c/o OBC.
The title and a short abstract is given for each article, and also the first author's address to enable those wanting further information. A number of papers from *Bird Conservation International* are discussed. Details of this journal are available from Cambridge University Press at The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, U.K.

REGIONAL

Status and habitat of the White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* *by A. J. Green (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT, U.K.).* ***Bird Conserv. Internatn.*** *3: 119-143.* This complements Green's 1993 *Forktail* paper and both summarise data in *The status and conservation of the White-winged Wood Duck* Cairina scutulata *IWRB Spec. Publ. 17. by A. J. Green,* (available from the above address at £10 plus £2.50 post in U.K., £3 overseas). A minimum population of 336 birds has been recorded at 55 sites since 1980.

INDIA

The trade in Hill Mynas in India *by V. Menon (TRAFFIC India)* ***TRAFFIC Bulletin*** *14: 81-82.* Tens of thousands of this protected species are thought to be traded.

Bird Migration Project. Executive Summary 1987-1992 *by S. A. Hussain. Unpublished report, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay 400 023, India.* Wader data are summarised in *The Stilt* 22: 51-53. About 183,230 birds of 545 species were ringed in ten years of US grant-aid.

The effect of human interference on the nesting of the Openbill Stork *Anastomus oscitans* at the Raiganj Wildlife Sanctuary, India *by T. Datta and B. C. Pal (Dept Zoology, North Bengal University, 734 430, Dist. Darjeeling, West Bengal, India).* ***Biol. Conserv.*** *64: 149-154.* Storks nested higher up trees or moved out of the disturbed parts of the sanctuary.

The variable breeding success of the Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* in south-east India and protective measures needed for its conservation *by M. Holloway (66 Norwood Terrace, Shipley, Bradford BD18 2BB, U.K.).* ***Biol. Conserv.*** *65: 1-8.* Poor breeding results were attributed to poor colony location or egg predation.

Changes in waterbird diversity due to the construction of Pong Dam Reservoir, Himachal Pradesh, India *by S. Pandey (Wildlife Institute of India, Chandrabani, Post Box no. 18, Dehra Dun 248 001, India).* ***Biol. Conserv.*** *66: 125-130.* Comparison with 1920s pre-dam data.

NEPAL

Re-evaluation of the taxonomic status of *Phylloscopus subaffinis arcanus* *by P. Alström* ***et al.*** *(Kungsgatan 3, 462 33 Vänersborg, Sweden).* ***Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*** *113: 207-209.* This Nepalese taxon proves to be synonymous with *Cettia f. flavolivacea.*

CHINA

The Black-necked Cranes *Grus nigricollis* of Ruoergai Marshes, Sichuan, China *by D. A. Scott (Runagate, Far Green, Coaley, Dursley, Glos GL11 5EL, U.K.).* ***Bird Conserv. Internatn.*** *3: 245-259.* With an estimated 600 to 900 breeding cranes, this plateau is the most important site for this species but under increasing threat from drainage.

A new species of *Phylloscopus* warbler from Hainan Island, China *by U. Olsson et al. (University of Göteborg, Dept of Zoology, Box 25059, S-400 31*

*Göteborg, Sweden). **Ibis** 135: 2-7.* Type-description of Hainan Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus hainanus*, a locally common montane forest species.

A new species of mountain finch *Leucosticte* from western Tibet *by C. S. Roselaar (Instituut voor Taxonomische Zoölogie [Zoölogisch Museum], Universiteit van Amsterdam, Postbus 4766, 1009 AT Amsterdam, Netherlands). **Bull. Brit. Orn. Club** 112: 225-231.* Two specimens, collected in 1929, differ from Black-headed Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte brandti* in plumage and biometrics and are described as Sillem's Mountain-Finch *L. sillemi*.

Notes on Sillem's Mountain-Finch, a recently described species from western Tibet *by C. S. Roselaar (address above). **Dutch Birding** 16: 20-25.* Includes details of the type locality and a colour illustration of both Sillem's and Black-headed Mountain-Finches.

Notes on birds observed in beech (*Fagus*) forests in the Maoershan Natural Reserve, Guangxi Autonomous Region, China *by F. Vuilleumier (Department of Ornithology, AMNH, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, NY 10024, USA). **Bull. Brit. Orn. Club** 113: 152-166.* Fifty-eight species were seen in three days.

THAILAND AND MALAYSIA

The avifauna of the North Selangor peat-swamp forest, West Malaysia *by Kang Nee and Le Pheng Guan (Dept Zoology, National University of Singapore, Kent Ridge, Singapore 0511). **Bird Conserv. Internatn.** 3: 169-179.* Seventy bird species were seen in logged and cleared forest; management proposals are given.

The effect of fishing on the distribution and behaviour of waterbirds in the Kukut area of Lake Songka, southern Thailand *by G. J. Pierce **et al.** (Department of Zoology, University of Aberdeen, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN, U.K.). **Biol. Conserv.** 66: 23-34.* A preliminary study comparing fishing techniques, bird species and vegetation cover.

Ranges of males of the Great Hornbill Buceros bicornis, Brown Hornbill *Ptilolaemus tickelli* and Wreathed Hornbill *Rhyticeros undulatus* in Khao Yai National Park, Thailand *by P. Poonswad and A. Tsuji (Dept Microbiology, Faculty of Science, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand). **Ibis 136: 79-86.*** Ranges of six males varied with species and season to a maximum of 28 km^2.

Khao Sam Roi Yot - one of the world's most threatened parks *by J. W. K. Parr et al. (Gatehouse Farm, Coldharbour Lane, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9LE, U.K.). **Oryx 27: 245-249.*** Encroachment on a limestone forest and freshwater marsh.

PHILIPPINES

The conservation status of the birds of Negros, Philippines *by T. M. Brooks et al.* **Bird Conserv. Internatn.** 2: 273-300.

Conservation status of the birds of Mindoro, Philippines *by G. C. L. Dutson et al.* **Bird Conserv. Internatn.** 2: 303-325.

The rediscovery of the Cebu Flowerpecker Dicaeum quadricolor, with notes on other forest birds on Cebu, Philippines *by G. C. L. Dutson et al.* **Bird Conserv. Internatn.** 3: 235-243.
These three papers, together with two 1992 *Forktail* papers are available together with records from other Philippine islands in: **Cambridge Philippines Rainforest Project 1991 Final Report** *by T. D. Evans et al.* **(BirdLife International Study Report no. 54**, vi + 96 pp, available for £5.00 from BirdLife at Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, U.K.). Most lowland and some montane species endemic to these denuded islands are in imminent danger of extinction.

Specimen records of Aleutian Terns from the Philippines *by D. S. Lee (North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences, P.O. Box 27647, Raleigh, NC 27611, U.S.A.).* **Condor 94: 276-279.** Six specimens were taken in May in subadult plumage; the winter range of this species is unknown.

INDONESIA

Kukila 6(2) was published in June 1993 and contains seven papers and five notes including:
The birds of Indonesia. *Kukila* checklist no. 1. Additions, corrections and notes - 1 *by P. Andrew.*

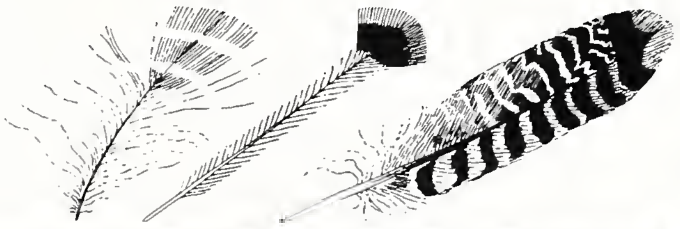
Notes on the birds of the tidal lowlands and floodplains of South Sumatra province, Indonesia *by W. J. M. Verheught* ***et al.***

Recent ornithological observations from Buru *by P. Jepson.*
Details from The Editors, Kukila, P.O. Box 4087, Jakarta 12040, Indonesia.

Trade, status and management of three parrots in the North Moluccas, Indonesia: White Cockatoo ***Cacatua alba*****, Chattering Lory** ***Lorius garrulus*** **and Violet-eared Lory** ***Eos squamata*** *by F. R. Lambert (IUCN Trade Specialist Group, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, U.K.).* ***Bird Conserv. Internatn.*** *3: 145-168.* This is a summarised version of an IUCN report (**The status and trade in north Moluccan parrots with particular emphasis on** ***Cacatua alba, Lorius garrulus*** **and** ***Eos squamata*** *by F. R. Lambert. IUCN/SSC Trade Specialist Group, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, U.K. xiv + 120 pp).* Population estimates for these species on Obi, Bacan and Halmahera indicate unsustainable trade levels, especially of the first two (endemic) species.

First record of the Blue Crowned Pigeon ***Goura cristata*** **on Seram** *by A. C. Kitchener et al. (Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1 JF, U.K.)* ***Bull. Brit.Orn. Club*** *113: 42-43.* A single captive bird claimed to have been caught locally (but see *Kukila* 6: 48).

Stray feathers



Birds of Thailand and Indonesia

Internationally known natural history publisher New Holland is currently developing an extensive international series of bird photoguides and is urgently seeking authors and photo contributors for titles on the birds of Thailand and the birds of Indonesia (two volumes). These will be quality books containing some 250 species and aimed at amateur naturalists and a mid-market readership. All titles in the series will be produced to the same high standards as New Holland's field and concise guides and its WWF titles, *Wild Malaysia* and *Wild Indonesia*, and sold through the company's worldwide distribution network. If you are interested or can suggest potential contributors, please contact as soon as possible: Elizabeth Stubbs, Publishing Manager: Wildlife and General Books, NHP, 37 Connaught Street, London W2 2AZ. Tel: 071 258 0204. Fax: 071 262 6184.

Vulture photos needed

Photos of White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* (**not** adults), Long-billed Vulture *G. indicus*, Eurasian Griffon *G. fulvus* and Himalayan Griffon *G. himalayensis* are needed for an identification paper that will be published in 1995. We are interested in both flying and perched birds. Photos will be fully acknowledged and should be sent to: Per Alström, Kungsgatan 3, 462 33 Vänersborg, Sweden.

Malaysia bird racing

Birds do not race and as birdwatchers we don't want to race when we watch birds, period.

Or is there something more to bird racing than meets the eye of the usually critical, often individualistic birder?

I am told that bird racing first started in Hong Kong, but I do not know exactly what were the motives and ideas behind this initiative. When the event was held in Malaysia for the first time at Fraser's Hill in 1988, the driving force was conservation. Therefore the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) put itself behind the event and became a co-organiser together with the Fraser's Hill Development Corporation (FHDC).

Conservation has been the justification ever since, and MNS now organises its own race in Selangor state. Funds raised from the race go towards the maintenance and extension of the Kuala Selangor Nature Park (KSNP).

FHDC has even managed to get the Fraser's Hill event scheduled on the official Malaysian tourist calender, meaning that in Malaysia no other main tourist activity can be held on that day! It is probably unique in the sense that an activity meant purely for the enjoyment of nature obtains this status.

I believe it is certainly justified to say that there is more to bird racing in Malaysia, and I therefore call on all OBC members and all other interested parties to:

- accept birdracing in Malaysia as a major support for conservation and as a demonstration for sustainable development, if there ever will be such a thing.
- participate, if possible with a team of three or four persons. If need be MNS will arrange for experienced local birders in a way to promote our mutual goal for sustainable development.

For instance we could link the three Malaysian races in Fraser's Hill, Kuala Selangor and Taman Negara so as to provide consecutive opportunities to view birds of wetland, montane and lowland forest habitats. There are also plans to offer very reasonably priced packages for air and local travel and for food and lodging.

Please let us have your suggestions. If they are not implemented for this year's events at Fraser's (4-5 June), Taman Negara (July/August) and KNSP (October), then we will use them for next year's planning.

Contributed by M. Riegstra.

Wildlife film symposium in China

An international symposium on wildlife films will be held in Changchun, north-east China from 16 to 22 October, 1994. The symposium will discuss how film and television can be used to promote the scientific study of wildlife and the popularisation of science, and field trips to nature reserves are planned after the event.

For more details, contact: Organising Committee of the International Symposium on Wild Animal Films, 16 Hongqi Jie, Changchun Film Studies, Changchun 130021, Jilin province, China. Fax (0431) 552408.

21st World Conference of ICBP

The 21st World Conference of the International Council of Bird Preservation, and its first as the new BirdLife International, will be held in Rosenheim, Germany between the 12 to 18 August 1994. The deadline for registration is 1 July 1994. For those requiring more information please contact: Bayer, Akademie für Naturschutz and Landschaftspflege (ANL), ICBP World Conference, Postfach 1261, D-83406 Laufen/Salzach, Germany. Telephone: +49 8682/7097. Fax: +49 8682/1560.

Ever visited Kaziranga?

I would be most grateful if any persons or groups who have visited Kaziranga National Park in Assam send me any information on the birds seen during their visit. Please send all records to Prof. B. C. Bhattacharjee, Dept. of Zoology, Gawahati University, Guwahati 781 014, Assam, India.

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From the field

These are largely unconfirmed records covering the period from late August 1993 to March 1994. We urge that if they have not already done so, contributors provide full details to the relevant regional organisations in due course.

BANGLADESH

A pair of **Rain Quail** *Coturnix coromandelica* at Malumghat Forest on 6 March (DJ) were the second recent record, at the same site as the last sighting. Skywatching in the south-east of the country has been very productive: **White-rumped Spinetail** *Zoonavena sylvatica* and **Brown-backed Needletail** *Hirundapus giganteus* both recorded daily between 7-10 March at Inani Forest were the first recent records for Bangladesh (DJ); **Silver-backed Needletail** *Hirundapus cochinchinensis* recorded at Malumghat on 6 March (DJ) and at Inani Forest between 7-10 March were the first definite records; also at Inani an immature **Rufous-bellied Eagle** *Hieraaetus kienerii* was seen on 10 March, this being the first recent record for the country (DJ).

The first recent records of **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and **Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* were at Pasua Beel: the pelican was seen on 25 December (DJ) and a group of four lapwings on 19-20 February (DJ, RH). Also there on 25 December was a **Smoky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuligiventer*, the third record for the country. **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were again evident: two adults on 22 January (DJ, AW, RH) and and immature on 11 March (PT), all near Arich, were the 4th and 5th records.

A female **Ashy Minivet** *Pericrocotus divaricatus*, which is a first record for Bangladesh, was seen in the Botanical Gardens, Dhaka on 4 December (DJ, AW). It was carefully distinguished from **Brown-rumped Minivet** *P. cantonensis* which is a regular winter visitor in small numbers among the commoner **Rosy Minivet** *P. roseus* in Bangladesh. After uncertainty over previous reports of **Olive-backed Sunbird** *Nectarinia jugularis*, a male was seen in the company of the regular sunbird species at Malumghat Forest on 14 March (DJ), this apparently representing the first record for the Indian subcontinent.

HONG KONG

Seawatching was excellent off Cape D'Aguilar throughout much of August and September, and included the following: **Streaked Shearwaters** *Calonectris leucomelas*, which had previously been recorded only twice before off Hong Kong, were seen several times with two on 21 August, three on 17 September and, three on 25 September; a small all-dark shearwater sp. (Streaked is currently the only shearwater on the Hong Kong list) on 21 August; a first stage **Christmas Island Frigatebird** *Fregata andrewsi* was seen on 17 September, which will, if accepted, be a new species for Hong Kong; three **Long-tailed Jaegers** *Stercorarius longicaudus* on 21 August and one on 26 August constitute the first autumn records; a light-phase adult **Pomarine Jaeger** *Stercorarius pomarinus* and eight other skuas probably relating to this species were seen on 26 August, and are the second record for the Territories, with the first being as long ago as 1957.

Currently only Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* is on the Hong Kong list but a number of all-dark petrels were reported off Cape D'Aguilar, as follows: four on 21 August were considered to be **Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanodroma matsudairae*; a probable **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* on 17 September and 11 on 25 September; and, five probable **Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel** *O. monorhis* also on 25 September. There were also unprecedented counts of **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* from there with 179 on 18 September, and a staggering 749 between 07h00-16h30 the next day. A **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata*, a fourth record for Hong Kong, was seen there on 17 September. Following the first reports of flocks of **Aleutian Terns** *Sterna aleutica* mainly south of Hong Kong island in 1992 (*OBC Bull.* 17) more birds were seen again in 1993. The species was recorded on at least 12 dates between mid-August and early October the highest count being of 130 birds from Cape D'Aguilar on 22 August.

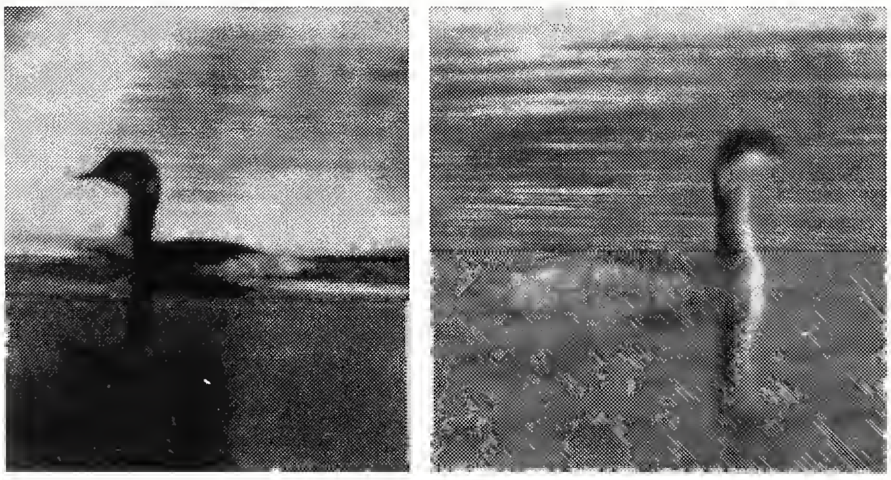
A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Mai Po on 29 August will be the first record for Hong Kong, if accepted. Also potentially new was a **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* seen over Cheung Chau on 23 August. The third record of **Blue-throated Bee-eater** *Merops viridis* comprised four birds flying over the fence at Tsim Bei Tsui on 6 October. A **Crested Kingfisher** *Megaceryle lugubris* was still present at Tai Lam Reservoir on 15 August. A **Middendorff's Warbler** *Locustella ochotensis* trapped at Shek Sheung Valley on 1 October is the second for Hong Kong, the first coming earlier in the year. A female **Little Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula westermanni* at Tai Po Kau on 12 and 15 August will be, if accepted, the first record for Hong Kong (all records courtesy of the Hong Kong Birdwatching Society).

INDIA

A **Horned Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* at the dam near Ramnagar, Corbett National Park on 28 December is the first record for India and only the second for the subcontinent (DS).

At Bharatpur from 6 January to at least 11 February there were two Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps griseigena* (PB, PH), and an influx of at least 10 **Cetti's Warblers** *Cettia cetti* in January (RD). **Spoonbill Sandpipers** *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* were seen at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu with one on 1 February and two on 4 and 5 February (AL).

A number of interesting records were made by Regulus Tour members during a visit to Nadampha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh, including: one **White-bellied Heron** *Ardea insignis* on 12 to 14 February; a single **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*; three **Black Storks**; **Snowy-throated Babbler** *Stachyris oglei* which was seen fairly frequently in the bamboo forest; and four **Beautiful Nuthatches**



Horned Grebe Podiceps auritus *at Ramnagar (photos: David van de Schoor)*

Beautiful Nuthatch Sitta formosa *by Richard Grimmett*
Sitta formosa.

NEPAL

At Kosi Tappu a **Plaintive Cuckoo** *Cacomantis merulinus* on 8 January (GT, HC) and three male and three female **Spanish Sparrows** *Passer hispaniolensis* on 20 January (GT, TRG, HC) were both third records for the country. Also of interest there was a **Black-capped Kingfisher** *Halcyon pileata* on 26 September (HC) and on 1 October (BBK). An **Abbott's Babbler** *Malococincla abbotti* reported from the Royal Bardia National Park on 19 November will be the most westerly record for the species, if confirmed (KK, RDC).

PHILIPPINES

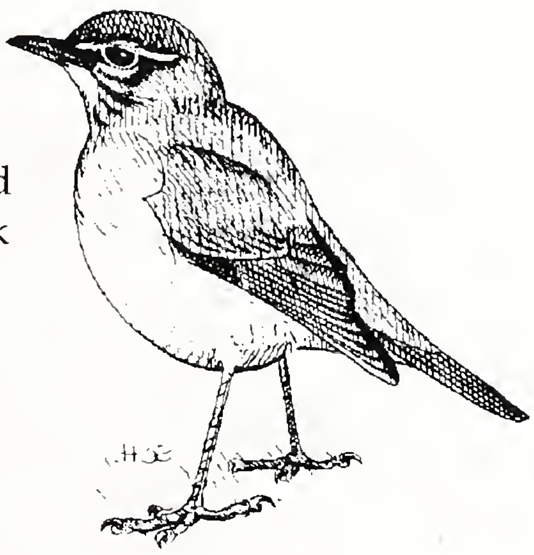
A **Colasisi** *Loriculus philippensis* seen at Tabanun, Cebu on 16 December showed the characters of the endemic race *chrysonotus*, which has been considered extinct (KM, NR). **Celestial Monarchs** *Hypothymis coelestis* were observed at both PICOP and Bislig, Mindanao on 20 and 21 February (TF, SH - Birdquest). A single **Whiskered Pitta** *Pitta kochi* was seen in degraded secondary forest on the lower slopes of Mount Halmut at the unusually low altitude of 360 m (KM, NR). On Bohol a **Philippine Eagle-Owl** *Bubo philippensis* seen well at Rajah Sikatuna National Park on 28 January is probably the first record for the island (PM, NH). Sitio Siete, near Lake Sebu, Mindanao has quickly become a popular destination for birders visiting the island and this January the seldom recorded endemic **Blue-capped Kingfisher** *Actenoides hombroni*, **Bagobo Babbler** *Trichastoma woodi*, **White-eared Tailorbird** *Orthotomus cinereiceps*, and **Whiskered Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum proprium* were seen there (PM, NH).

SINGAPORE

A number of potential first records for Singapore were made during the period. There were two **Oriental Pied-Hornbills** *Anthracoceros albirostris* seen at Pulau Ubin on 13 March. A **Little Black Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* sighted at Senoko on 20 August (still there on 12 September) and another at Sungei Selatar on 21 August would also be the first for peninsular Malaysia. There was a **Red-billed Starling** *Sturnus sericeus* with **Javan Mynas** *Acridotheres javanicus* at the Serangoon Estuary on 25 December and a **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* was ringed at Tuas Grassland and present between 6-12 February. A male **White-bellied Woodpecker** *Dryocopus javensis* seen at Sime Road Forest on 22 August and another at Bukit Timah on 6 September are the first records of the species from the islands since 1988 (all records LKS).

SRI LANKA

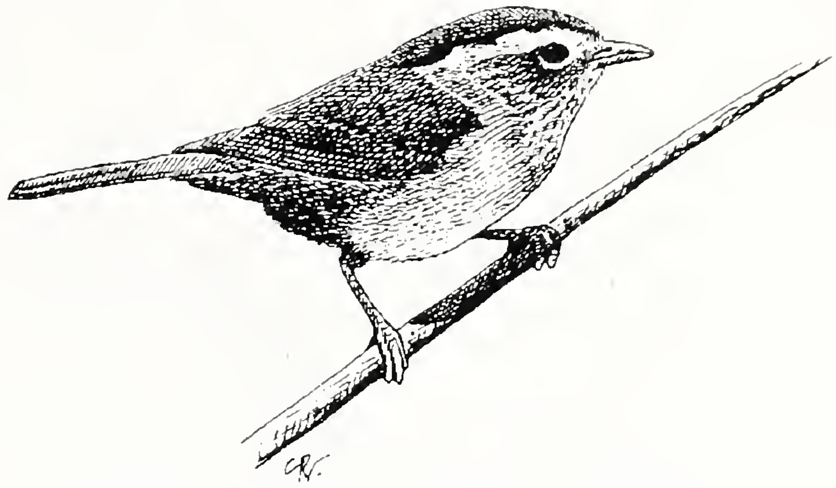
A female **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* observed at Victoria Park on 24 February is apparently the first record for Sri Lanka (AL, RR, GS, RS), and was still there a week later (PhH per AL).



Eyebrowed Thrush Turdus obscurus *by Simon Harrap*

VIETNAM

The rediscovery of the **Grey-crowned Crocias** *Crocias langbianis* on Chu Yang Sin (see pages **20-23**) was not the only interesting observation made during this visit. The commonest passerine above 2,000 m was **Spectacled Fulvetta** *Alcippe ruficapilla* (undescribed subspecies), and three other species not recorded recently from the Da Lat Plateau were seen, namely: Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta*, White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana* and Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis* (JE, NC).



Spectacled Fulvetta Alcippe ruficapilla *by Craig Robson*

A sighting of two single **Mountain Hawk-Eagles** *Spizaetus nipalensis* at Nam Cat Tien National Park on 20 and 22 February further suggests that the species occurs more regularly in Vietnam than was thought previously (CR, BK, - KingBird). Also at the same national park a group of one adult male and two immature or female **Pin-tailed Parrotfinches** *Erythrura prasina* was observed in secondary forest by a stream about 2 km upriver from the park headquarters during a visit between 16-20 January (MB). A group of more than 15 **Tristram's Buntings** *Emberiza tristrami* at Tam Dao on 15-16 February probably represents the first record for Vietnam (CR, BK, - KingBird).

Contributors:

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Addendum:

Under the China report in *OBC Bull.* 18 it was stated that the **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* at Beidaihe was possibly the first record for mainland China. Mike Chalmers has kindly pointed out that Hong Kong is geographically part of mainland China and will be in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Zone of the People's Republic of China after 1997. There are four records of **Pectoral Sandpiper** for Hong Kong, all in the Deep Bay area.

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1. **Articles** These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins, and should be no longer than 2,000 words. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, C. G. Sibley and B. L. Monroe (1990) *Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world.*

Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, ideally 15cm wide and 11cm high. References should be cited in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.

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